IMPRIMATUR

Hic Liber (*cui Titulus*, The True Liberty and Dominion of Conſcience, &c.

Martii 30. 1677.

Guil. Sill, R.P.D. Hen. Epiſc. Lond. à Sac. Dom.

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THE TRUE
Liberty and Dominion
OF
Conſcience
Vindicated, from the
USURPATIONS and ABUSES
OF
OPINION,
AND
Perſuaſion.

The Second Edition.

Prov. xx. ver. 27.
The Spirit of a Man is the Candle of the Lord.

LONDON,
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THE

THE TRUE LIBERTY AND DOMINION OF Conſcience.

CHAP. I.

The Introduction.

IT is the Excellency of humane Nature, that all its Actions are the Effects of Choice, & not of Chance: & therefore they are conſtantly addreſſed to ſome determinate End; this End is always Happineſs, either Real, or at leaſt that which

Men believe to be so. Now for the more certain attainment of whatsoever kind or degree of Happiness Men desire, they always propose to themselves some Way or Rule, by which they may direct and steer the course of their Actions, and Endeavours; which otherwise (like a Vessel in the midst of the main Ocean without Charts and Compass,) must be left to the mercy of all Accidents, and have only the bare possibility of uncertain Hazard, to conduct them to their wished Port. From hence it is, that there is no Art nor Science, Liberal nor Mechanical, but in the first place proposes necessary Rules, for the direction of those who are to be guided, or instructed therein, in order to the accomplishment, or attainment of their designed End. Now wherever there is such a Rule, in regard there are many ways of Error, though, but one of Truth, and that nothing is more Natural than for Men to Err by not attending to, or acting according to the Rule; there is a necessity of some Supreme Judge, who, by an impartial determination, shall judge all humane Actions, whether they are according to the command and direction of the Rule; and, by consequence,

Humanum est Errare.

ſequence, whether they are right or wrong, in order to the End which is propoſed and deſigned. This Judge in the Affairs of the World, ſuch as are Life, Honour, Riches, Fame, *&c.* is the determination of Reaſon, according to the beſt of every Mans knowledge and underſtanding. In the Concerns of Religion, it is called *Conſcience.* This is that univerſal Monarch, whoſe Ubiquitary Throne is eſtabliſh'd in every mortal Breaſt. To this the ancient Heathens owe all that little ſenſe they had of Religion and Virtue. 'Tis this that makes the zealous Muſsleman adore the falſe *Arabian*, and his ridiculous *Alchoran.* 'Tis this, has raiſed the *Roman* Mitre to its Triple height; and in ſhort 'tis *Conſcience*, that has rent ſo many puiſſant Crowns, from his pretended Univerſal and infallible Chair. Not that all theſe powerful Effects, have proceeded from a Conſcience rightly informed, but on the contrary, many of them from a moſt barbarous and ſtupid Ignorance of the beſt Rule, by which Conſcience ought to judge, and Men to act.

However, this does moſt manifeſtly demonſtrate, the Sovereign and Imperial

ſway, which even a pretended and imaginary Conſcience challenges in the management of all Humane Affairs.

It is beyond my Province as much as it ſurpaſſes either my power or hopes, in the following Papers, to think of regulating thoſe mighty Evils, which from the want of a right meaſure of what is matter of Conſcience, and what not, have overſpread the face of the whole Earth: and I ſhall arrive at the moſt happy period of my deſign, if I can do ſo charitable a Subject as this is, ſo much reaſon, as to inform ſome, and convince others of my dear Countrey-men, that hitherto, they have laboured under ſome dangerous miſtakes, in this great concern of Conſcience: the fatal effects of which miſunderſtandings, we have by the moſt deplorable experience been too deeply ſenſible of already; and ſtill lie under juſt apprehenſions, by reaſon of the great diviſions and diſtractions of mind, which daily prevail and increaſe amongſt us, that the ſame, or (if poſſible) a worſe Iliad of Tragical Miſeries may be repeated over again.

Happy were that *Moſes*, who could ſtand in this gap; and by ſeaſonably interpoſing

terpoſing his charitable endeavours, ſucceſsfully repair thoſe diſmal breaches in our Holy Church, which threaten that glorious Fabrick (and with it the State, which are embarqued in one common bottom) with Ruine and Subverſion.

The Sincerity of my Intention, free from Paſſion and Animoſity, as from Intereſt and Partiality; the Excellency of the Deſign, which is the Publick, and by conſequence the particular good of every Perſon; the preſſing Neceſſity of our preſent Affairs; and the incomparable, and almoſt incredible advantages which may ſucceed; as they gave the firſt motion to my thoughts, ſo they ſtill give me encouragement to hope the beſt, and that our wound is not incurable. Certainly, if there be any Balm in *Gilead*, to heal the ulcerated Sores of the miſerable People of theſe Nations, it muſt be ſuch a Medicine, as will unite us into one common Principle, whereby thoſe miſtakes, and miſunderſtandings, the principal occaſion of all our differences, may be removed for the preſent, and prevented for the future.

As for thoſe Perſons, whoſe Religion is their Intereſt; Zeal, Malice; and

Gain, Godliness; those Proselytes of *Demetrius*; I am not over-confident, that this will be accepted of by them, as a Bill of Divorce, between them and those gainful Persuasions, which they have so unluckily espoused: however, Truth will prevail, and may convince, where it cannot convert.

But if they be resolved to raise Uproars for their dear *Diana*, they are out of my Sphere; and must be left to the Town-Clerk, the Secular Power to appease, and convince with such coercive Arguments, as indeed are more fit for them, because more powerful than any that can be drawn out of all the Arcenals of Truth or Reason.

CHAP. II.

Of the Reason why there are so many Pretenders to Conscience, and of the Advantages they make of it, to promote their Interest, and favour their Designs.

THere has nothing made a greater noise for some Years past, in this our little *English* World, than loud Clamors about Matters of Conscience, for Liberty

Liberty of Conſcience, Toleration and Indulgence to Tender Conſciences. Nor is it leſs obvious, how groſly and notoriouſly Conſcience has, by ſome People, been abuſed. There will appear no occaſion for wonder at all this, to any perſon who does but conſider, what incredible advantages have been made of that ſingle Word. I will not recount the proſperous Wickedneſſes of the late unhappy Times, in which the principal Actors and Contrivers were obliged to that great Name, for the moſt of their Victories, Glory, Fame and Riches, and all thoſe unhappy Triumphs and Trophies which they did Erect upon the woful Ruines both of Church and State: but let us conſider the preſent advantages which are made of Conſcience.

Firſt, Conſcience is a keen and two-edged Sword; a Weapon both offenſive and defenſive; and indeed nothing cuts ſo deep in vulgar minds, who are moſt apt to be afrighted with awful apprehenſions of what they leaſt underſtand. With this Weapon it is, that all Diſſenting Parties in their Religious Wars, arm and fortifie themſelves one againſt another: with this reſiſtleſs Sword they

make no more to untie the most solid Arguments from Scripture or Reason, than once 'tis said the young *Alexander* did of the famous Gordian Knot; who untied that with his Scymiter, which he could not effect with all his Curiosity. 'Tis with this victorious Sword they conquer and subdue; and 'tis with this they do preserve their conquered Proselytes. I mean only the Name.

Secondly, Conscience is a most invincible shield, a sure defence against all the blows of Adversaries: so that though Nature, Art, Eloquence, nay, and Scripture too, do all conspire to bring the most combined Demonstration of Truth and Reason against them, the mighty blow shall be prevented from doing execution, and be received upon this *Æs triplex*, this invulnerable Target; and 'tis no more but saying, *It may be so as you say; but it is against my Conscience, and therefore I cannot believe or do as you would persuade me.*

Thirdly, Conscience is a certain *Asylum*, an impregnable Sanctuary and defence against all accidents. Hither, as to their last refuge, all Dissenters retreat securely, and are at as much ease, and in as

as undoubted ſafety, as if both Heaven and Earth were entred into the ſtricteſt League, Offenſive and Defenſive (as they think they are bound to do) to protect and defend them.

Laſtly, This is a never failing Cordial in times of ſuffering; and has a ſecret virtue to ſweeten that which of it ſelf is moſt bitter, and inſupportable to all the world. Thus an Opinion that it is for Conſcience, can make the juſteſt and ſevereſt of humane puniſhments, to paſs over the pallate, with the ſugar'd reliſh of Perſecution for the Goſpels ſake: Thus Death, though the deſerved merit of Rebellion and Treaſon, has, by ſome, been ſtyled Martyrdom; and the ſuffering Perſecution or Death thought meritorious both here and hereafter. Nay, ſo ſtrangely have ſome men been blinded with the opinion of acting for and by Conſcience, as to pronounce Divine Vengeance, Mercy; ſo that a villanous Contriver and Acter of Murder and Rebellion, and an infamous Regicide and Uſurper, though one taken away by the immediate ſtroke of God, the Sword of the deſtroying Angel; and the other dying with all the agonies of Mind and Body,

Ireton.

O. Cromwel.

Body, ſhall yet be ſaid to be gone to God, and taken away from the evil to come; and, which exceeds all belief, by the blaſphemous Rhetorick of a Poſthumous flattery, ſhall be affirmed, to rival the moſt glorious Jeſus, and be ſet on the right hand of the Majeſty on high.

For theſe and ſuch like reaſons it is, that all Parties, of whatſoever perſuaſion, pretend to ſo great a ſhare and intereſt in Conſcience. Upon this foundation, as they perſuade themſelves, they build the Pile of all their Religion; and from the Dictates of this ſuppoſed infallible Guide it is, that they receive their Principles, and to which they conform their Practiſe. Ask a Quaker, why he will ſhew no reſpect or reverence to his Superiors? Why he will not take a lawful Oath before a lawful Magiſtrate, though for the manifeſtation of truth, the end of ſtrife, or the vindication of injur'd innocence? Why he admits of no Sacraments? or about any other of his Tenents. Demand of an Anabaptiſt, why he will not allow Infants under the Goſpel the ſame priviledge they did enjoy under the Law, though he muſt acknowledge the Goſpel a better Covenant?

nant? Inquire of a Presbyterian, why he ſtarts at the Surplice and Ceremonies? and any Sect, why they ſeparate from the Communion of the Church of *England*? Shew them all the advantages of Union, both as to Religion and Policy; demonſtrate all the dangers and inconveniences of Separation: and yet for all you can ſay, after all their wild roving, and unconcluding Diſcourſes, Objections, Scruples, and Allegations, to wind themſelves off from the main point; when they find themſelves forced from one of their ſtrong holds to another, and at laſt ſtraitned by the prevailing ſtrength of unavoidable and Dilemmatical Reaſon; the reſult of all ſhall be, that they are not ſatisfied in Conſcience; or that their Conſcience will not give them leave to believe or do this or that to which you would perſuade them. Though after all this, I doubt not to make it appear, that the greateſt part of thoſe who talk ſo loud about Conſcience, I mean the vulgar, who have little to ſay for themſelves beſides that, do ſcarcely underſtand the Word, and are abſolute ſtrangers to the true ſence and meaning of the thing.

That ſuch therefore as are not reſolved to

to be wilful, may be undeceived; and that they may not give to this pretended Conſcience a greater Sovereignty than ever God Almighty did deſign the true one, by ſetting it up as an Omnipotent Idol in their hearts, I offer this following Diſcourſe; which if peruſed with that ſobriety and impartiality of conſideration, as becomes a Concern of ſo great moment, may, I hope, conduce much to the preſent ſatisfaction of many, and the publick advantage of my Native Countrey; by removing the occaſion of ſo many heats and animoſities, ſeparations and diviſions, as draw their original principally from theſe miſtakes about matters of Conſcience.

CHAP. III.

Of the great Influence which the true Conſcience has upon all the affairs of Humane Life; and therefore the great neceſſity there is, that all men ſhould be rightly informed concerning it.

HAving now ſhewn the great power of a pretended Conſcience; before we proceed any further, it will be requiſite to ſhew, of what concern it is for all

all men rightly to underſtand themſelves in this affair of Conſcience: which cannot be better done, than by diſplaying the powerful Influence which Conſcience challenges in the management of all Humane Actions. We will therefore briefly trace it through its vaſt Dominions of Oeconomicks, Ethicks, Politicks, and Divinity.

We will begin then with private Families, and there we ſhall find Conſcience to be the only bond of Union, the only maintainer and preſerver of thoſe reſpective Duties which are owing from one to another, in thoſe little primitive Societies of Mankind: And therefore we ſee where this bears the ſway, there is always the moſt Domeſtick peace, concord, and tranquillity; on the contrary, where this Principle is wanting, neither the obligations of Nature, Education, or Reaſon, are powerful enough to keep men within the limits of their Duty: but *Cain* ſhall imbrue his hands in the innocent blood of his only Brother *Abel*: *Amnon* ſhall commit a Rape upon his beautiful Siſter *Tamar*: *Abſalom* ſhall rebel againſt, and endeavour to depoſe his Father: in ſhort, without a ſenſe of the

the Obligations of Conſcience, the Maſter of the Family will be unkind to the Wife of his boſome, cruel to his Children, tyrannical to his Servants: The Wife will be falſe and treacherous; the Children will be undutiful and unnatural; the Servants will be negligent, faithleſs, and diſobedient; and all extremely vitious: And, in a word, there will be neither Order, Government, Peace, nor any kind of happineſs, in theſe little Communities, without Conſcience.

If we ſtep out of private Doors into the wider World, we ſhall find, that without the ties of Conſcience, to oblige men to their ſeveral and reſpective Duties, there would be no ſuch thing as Virtue to be found in all Humane Race: and one might as ſucceſsfully ſeek, and, it may be, more probably find, Temperance, Chaſtity, Juſtice, Fortitude, Prudence, Magnanimity, Fidelity, and Gratitude, amongſt the ſavage Inhabitants of the Woods and Deſarts. Without this, men reſign themſelves up ſo wholly to the conduct of their blind Paſſions of Luſt, Hatred, Anger, Jealouſie, Fear and Deſpair, that they ſeem not only diveſted of all Morality, but even of Humanity

nity it ſelf. Let the late diſcovered Inhabitants of the Weſtern World atteſt this truth; amongſt whom, for want of this, there was ſo little to be found of Morality, that had it not been for Humane ſhape, and amongſt ſome of them, the name of Religion, it had been impoſſible to diſtinguiſh them from the ſo nearly related Brutes; ſome of which wanted little advantage of them, but a Language to expreſs themſelves in, ſo as to be underſtood.

But leaving theſe barbarous Regions, if we come where Morality has civilized, and common neceſſity has united men into Combinations and Societies; where there is the beſt eſtabliſh'd Government, the moſt prudent and excellent Laws, for the promoting the common good, and ſecuring every mans particular Intereſt and Property: yet ſtill the great Obligation to theſe Laws, and this Government, muſt be Conſcience: which ſeems to have been the Reaſon, why all the antient Law-givers, in imitation of *Moſes*, have pretended a familiarity, and frequent intercourſe with the Divinity; and therefore propoſed their Laws to the People, as the will of the Gods,

Gods, as being well assured, that no other Principle was capable of laying such a powerful Obligation to Duty and Obedience upon the minds of men, as such a belief. For all Obedience must be resolved into one of these Principles, Hope of Advantage, Fear of Punishment, or Conscience of Duty to God. Now if either Hopes of Advantage, or Fear of Punishment, are the only Inducements to Order and Obedience; less degrees of this Fear, or however a belief that they are out of the reach of punishment; or greater, though only hopes of private advantage, shall cancel all the Obligation to Humane Laws, and the publick advantage; and, like an impetuous Torrent, shall violently break all the banks of Laws and Government, and tear up the foundations of whatever does oppose its furious rage. Nor was there ever any popular Insurrection, Disorder, or Rebellion, in any Nation, but took its original from one of these tempestuous Principles. Whereas on the contrary, no hopes of Impunity from Humane Laws, no private Interest or Ambition, can persuade a man from that Duty which he ows to Laws and Government, upon the account of Con-

Conſcience; nay, we have further ſeen, that Cruelty it ſelf, with all its terrors and tormentors, has not been able to ſhake men off from this firm and ſolid foundation of fixed Obedience.

Thus we ſee Conſcience the beſt preſervative againſt the threatning dangers of Inteſtine Miſchiefs; nor is it leſs available againſt Foreign Force. For unity of mind, which is the genuine and natural effect of Conſcience, is certainly the greateſt policy, as well as ſtrength, of any People; whereas Diſcords, Diviſions, and mutual Diſſentions, give all the hopes and encouragements to a Foreign Power to invade, and all the helps and advantages to ſubdue. This made the *Roman Eagles* ſtretch their victorious Pinions over the greateſt part of the World; the civil Diſſentions of their Neighbours amongſt themſelves, made many potent, and otherwiſe invincible People, become an eaſie Quarry to their ambitious Arms: And whilſt, with a ſhew of Juſtice, they pretended to eſpouſe the Quarrel of the weaker part, by overpoiſing of the Ballance, both ſides, at laſt, became their prey, and thruſt their own necks under the fatal

yoke, which, by unity, they might eaſily have avoided. It is to this the *Ottomans* owe the prodigious ſucceſſes of their prevailing *Creſcents*, which had either never been ſo, or had long ſince been in their Wain again, if the Diviſions amongſt the *Chriſtian Princes* had not given them thoſe great advantages againſt themſelves. And if we conſult the Hiſtories of all Times, Places, and Nations, we ſhall find, that no People can bid fairer for their own ruine, or give a ſtronger invitation to their Enemies, than by their own Diviſions and Diſſentions. Nor did any Government ſuffer a diſſolution, without theſe foregoing, and too often fatal Prognoſticks, of its approaching Fall; *In ſe magna ruunt*——

Now there is nothing can beget, maintain, and preſerve this neceſſary Unity, like the Principles of Conſcience. This is that which cements mens Souls together with ſo cloſe and indiſſoluble an union, as nothing is able to divorce them from, but what ſeparates the Soul and Body. This begets true Love, and real Friendſhips, Knots never to be looſed, but with that of Life.

Laſtly, Let us take a ſhort turn within

in the Confines of *Divinity*, and there we ſhall find, that the Conſciouſneſs which men have to themſelves, that they owe an indiſpenſible duty to *God*, as their Great and Almighty *Sovereign* and Creator; and to all Mankind, as their common *Brethren*, is the only true foundation of all the *Religion* in the World. Without a due ſenſe of the firſt of theſe, men are Atheiſts; without the ſecond, they are worſe than Beaſts; without them both, they would be worſe than Devils, who believe, though it makes them tremble.

So that it appears, that without this inward Principle of Conſcience, there would be neither Honeſty, Fidelity, Juſtice, Civility, Morality, Policy, Government, or Divinity in the World, this being indeed the Foundation-principle of all theſe; and all other things without, but inducements, and perſuaſives to Goodneſs; which men may reſiſt, and (though not without difficulty) overcome; but till they can fly from themſelves, they ſhall never be able wholely to ſubdue, and conquer all the power and influence of Conſcience: or though they may be ſo hardy to rebel againſt it, yet

can they never be able to escape its Tortures and Punishments, but that of the Poet will be an universal truth,

Juvenal. Sat. 13. prope finem.

——Hos tu
Evasisse putes; quos diri Conscia facti
Mens habet attonitos, & surdo verbere cædit
Occultum quatiente animo tortore flagellum?
Pœna autem vehemens, ac multo sævior illis
Quas & Cæditius gravis invenit & Rhadamanthus,
Nocte, dieque suum gestare in pectore testem.

Well rendred into *English* in those few words of the wisest King *Solomon*, *A wounded Conscience who is able to bear?* For let men say or do what they please, this Imperial Principle will rule in the minds of men, either with the *Golden Sceptre*, or the *Iron Rod.*

Prov. 18. 14.

CHAP. IV.

Some necessary and universal Principles laid down, upon which Conscience depends, and according to which it acts.

PHilosophy tells us, *Corruptio optimi est pessima*; the best things abused, become the worst: there is no poison so invincible, as that which comes compounded

pounded with a Cordial, which by its treacherous agreeableneſs to the deluded palate, obtains an eaſie admiſſion, and a ſpeedy paſſage to the vital Spirits. It is therefore the common Intereſt of all Mankind, to endeavour after a true and right underſtanding of this Principle, which does ſo univerſally influence all their Lives and Actions. That we may therefore take a true meaſure of it, it is requiſite that we conſider of ſome common Principles, which are to be found in the minds of men; whether innate or traditional, it matters not; for from theſe Conſcience derives its Original: upon the belief of theſe it does depend: and according to theſe, if it be permitted its native liberty and freedom, it always acts.

The firſt of theſe is, That there is one *Supreme Being*, which is the firſt cauſe of all other *Beings* in the World. And this is that which under various names and notions, has yet in all Ages, and amongſt all Nations, paſt for the moſt bleſſed, eternal, and by all to be adored *Deity*.

Secondly, That this *Supreme Being* is of a moſt perfect and excellent Nature,

infinitely happy in Himself, so as nothing can add to, or diminish his absolute and eternal Felicity. This was the Antient and Universal belief of the World concerning the *Divine Nature*; Nay, *Lucretius*, a man not over kind to that which he calls *Gravis Religio*, endeavours to establish his *Demi-Atheism* upon this foundation; that the *Divine Nature* being transcendently happy within it self, since it could receive neither addition, nor diminution, therefore did not concern it self with the management of the affairs of the World; as appears by those well known, and too much abused Verses of his

Omnis enim per se Divum Natura necesse est
Immortali ævo summa cum pace fruatur
Semota à nostris rebus, sejunctaque longe:
Nam privata dolore omni, privata periclis,
Ipsa suis pollens opibus, nil indiga nostri
Nec bene promeritis capitur, nec tangitur ira.

Thirdly, That according to the excellency of his Nature, his Wisdom, Power and Goodness, he made all things, and Mankind especially, for a most excellent End.

Fourthly, That this End was primarily

ly the manifeſtation of his own Glory, in his Wiſdom, Power, and Goodneſs. Secondarily, and in order thereunto, the Happineſs of all his Creatures, according to their ſeveral capacities, either only here in this World, or if they be capable of it, both here and hereafter in a future ſtate.

Fifthly, That therefore there is a future ſtate after this life.

Laſtly, That in that future ſtate, there are Rewards and Puniſhments.

Theſe ſeveral Poſitions have a natural dependency and connexion one upon another, and are ſuch as have generally, if not univerſally, been believed in the World, or at leaſt by the far greateſt part, beſt and moſt underſtanding of men: and indeed they are ſuch Truths, as no man can deny any one of them, without the manifeſt danger of ruining all the reſt.

Now from theſe common Notions, theſe neceſſary Conſequences follow.

Firſt, That all the Creation, and eſpecially the Nobler parts of it, and particularly Mankind, owe, unto this moſt excellent Being, all Duty and Obedience, and ſuch ſervice as they are capable of and he requires.

Secondly, It follows, that all the whole Creation, and particularly Mankind, ought, according to their capacity and ability, to promote the great Ends of the Creation, which are the praiſe and glory of the great, good, and wiſe Creator, and the happineſs and well-being of the whole, and every part: And for this, Man may go to School to the inanimate Creatures, who all perform their obedient ſervice, with the moſt punctual and exact decency and order, both for his praiſe, their own preſervation, and the happineſs of the Univerſe: according to that of the Royal Pſalmiſt, *Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapors, Stormy Winds fulfil his Word, and praiſe his Name*; ſtrictly obſerving thoſe Laws which at firſt he did impoſe upon them.

Pſal. 148. 8.

Laſtly, It follows from the juſtice and power of this excellent Nature, that thoſe parts of the Creation, which do, in obedience to his Will, endeavour to promote thoſe excellent Ends and Deſigns of his Glory in the happineſs of the Creation, ſhall, as the Reward from his Bounty upon their Obedience, be made partakers of that happineſs they are capable of, and which, in his wiſdom, he

he ſees beſt for them both here and hereafter: And that thoſe parts of the Creation, who, in oppoſition or contempt of ſo great goodneſs, excellency and power, endeavor to croſs, hinder and obſtruct theſe great Ends of the Creation, ſhall therefore be miſerable, both here and hereafter, by the want of that happineſs; as alſo, by ſuch other penalties as the greatneſs of their Crimes deſerves, and their Natures are capable of.

CHAP. V.

Of Conſcience, its Deſcription, what is its proper Employment; and the manner of its Operation.

HAving ſhewn what Principles are the foundation of Conſcience, *viz.* a ſenſe of that Duty which we owe to God, and to one another. The next inquiry muſt of neceſſity be, how theſe Duties are to be performed, ſo as they may be agreeable and acceptable to thoſe to whom we are to pay them. And herein common Reaſon obliges us to believe, that we are bound to follow the directions of the *Supreme Being*, ſo far as he

he has been pleaſed to manifeſt his Will and Pleaſure to us. Amongſt *Chriſtians*, the *Canon* of the *Holy Scripture* has always been taken for this *Rule* of *Direction*, as being the *Divine Revelation of the Will of God*. And whoſoever does ſeriouſly and attentively conſider the ſcope of thoſe Sacred Writings, muſt of neceſſity confeſs them to owe their Original to the Divine Nature, ſuppoſing it ſuch as has before been deſcribed, and univerſally believed: for all their Commands, Inſtructions, and Exhortations, are directly level'd at theſe great and glorious deſigns of the moſt excellent Spirit, by promoting his Glory, and the happineſs of Mankind, both here in this life, and hereafter in the life to come. So that now having found we owe a Duty, and having likewiſe found a Rule for our direction, how we ought to perform this Duty, there will be no great difficulty to find what Conſcience is; for it is no other thing than that Principle which judges whether we have diſcharged our Duty according to this Rule, and theſe Directions.

I do purpoſely avoid the Niceties of the Schools, as too full of Curioſity, and not

not at all conducing to my deſign, which is to avoid all intricacy and perplexedneſs, and to give ſuch an eaſie, proper, and natural deſcription, and notion of Conſcience, that every man may find it in his own breaſt.

Conſcience therefore, is that Power which every Man hath within his own mind of judging all his thoughts, words and actions, whether they are agreeable to that which is the beſt Rule, by which they ought to be directed. Thus from a belief that there is a *GOD*, and from the Commands in *Scripture* to worſhip Him, and Him only, my Conſcience, or Power that I have of judging my ſelf, immediately informs me, that I ought not to neglect his Worſhip, or to give it to any Creature: If therefore I do either wholly, or in part omit it, or miſplace my Worſhip, my Conſcience tells me, I have done amiſs, becauſe I have not followed the direction of the Rule. Thus from the belief, that I ought to contribute all I can, to the accompliſhment of the great and good deſign of the *Almighty Being*, in promoting the happineſs of all the parts of the Creation, my Conſcience preſently informs me, that

that I ought to do all the good I can in all ſences unto all Men: And on the contrary, that therefore I muſt be careful to avoid doing any wilful injury to my ſelf, or to any other perſon, whereby their preſent happineſs may be impaired, or their future leſſened or prevented; becauſe in ſo doing, I follow the directions of the Rule, which only is ſatisfactory to Conſcience; whoſe office is to accuſe me, if I do wrong; to encourage and acquit me, if I do what is right, and what I ought to do. So that to make up Conſcience, there muſt be firſt, a true and exact Rule for all our Actions, which we take the *Scriptures* to be, *as being*, as St. *Paul* ſaith, *ſufficient to make the man of God wiſe unto ſalvation*, which I think is a ſufficiency for a Rule beyond all exceptions; and they who expect a better Rule, certainly expect another End, better, I am ſure, it is impoſſible: And, as before was intimated, if there were a neceſſity, it were no hard task to prove the *Scriptures*, in all particulars, the moſt excellent Rule for the management of all humane Actions, in order to the forementioned Ends of Gods Glory, and the Happineſs of the Univerſe.

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Secondly, There muſt be a true knowledge of this Rule, *Scientia* before *Conſcientia*; which Preposition denotes only the private application of this knowledge to particular perſons and things: for this is moſt clear and evident, that I muſt firſt know this or that is to be believed, or done, and after this or that manner, before I can believe it to be my Duty, or be able to paſs a judgment upon my ſelf, that I have done well, or ill, in believing, or not believing, doing, or not doing any thing, or not doing it as I ought, according to the direction of my Rule.

Laſtly, there muſt be an impartial and true judgement of my actions, by this Rule, that is, whether they have been according to the directions of the Rule, which is the proper employment of Conſcience, whoſe work is to meaſure my thoughts, words, and actions, and to try whether they are conformable to the Rule by which I am bound to act, and according to that judgment, either to abſolve or condemn me for them.

So that Conſcience, thus properly taken, can only be exerciſed about ſuch things as are certainly known, and by conſequence,

quence, absolutely necessary to be done, for such are all and only the commands and directions of the Rule, according to that remarkable place of St. *Paul*, concerning his own practice, which ought to be a pattern to all men. And herein do I exercise my self, to have a *Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards Men.* That is, the proper and peculiar Employ of Conscience, is to judge and determine, whether I do my Duty to God and my Neighbour, according to what I know is his Will revealed in his holy Word.

Acts 24. 16.

Now in regard, that upon this true Notion of Conscience, there lies a great deal of weight; and it being the common mistake amongst weak minds, to take every thing which is offer'd to them as such, without a due examination, for a matter of Conscience in the strictest sence: I will endeavor to clear this Point, and make it appear, that Conscience is only directly concerned about such things as are certainly known, and therefore absolutely necessary to be believed and done, or not done.

First, therefore we will inquire into the Nature, and, as I may call it, the Essence of Conscience. *Se-*

Secondly, we will examine and conſider its manner of operation and acting in all men.

Now the very Eſſence of Conſcience is Knowledge, for no man can have a Conſcience to himſelf of any thing which he does not know, nor of any thing further than he does know it. For Example, I know that *GOD is*, and that He is to be Worſhipped; and therefore my Conſcience tells me, I am obliged to act according to that knowledge, and that I ought to adore him. I know that no Creature is to be worſhipped with Divine Adoration, and therefore my Conſcience tells me I ſin againſt knowledge, if I give Adoration by worſhipping either Men or Angels, much more if I beſtow it upon the more ignoble parts of the Creation, Gold, Silver, Wood, Stone, Creeping Things, Birds, or Four-footed Beaſts. I do not certainly know whether Saints departed this Life can hear my Prayers, though made to them in the moſt modeſt ſence, and in the ſame nature as I would do, if they were alive, beg of them to pray or intercede for me; and therefore, if I do not pray to them to pray for me, my

my Conſcience does not accuſe me of having neglected a Duty which I ought to have done, or ſinning againſt my knowledge: So that it is clear, that to Know is of the Eſſence of Conſcience, ſo that there can be no Conſcience without it. Now *Scientia eſt de certis & indubitatis*, all knowledge is of certain and undoubted things; and this certainty, which is the foundation of knowledge, is grounded either upon the Demonſtration of Senſe, Reaſon, or Divine Revelation; and whatever I know, it is becauſe I have a certainty that it is ſuch in its own nature; either from the evidence of Senſe, which cannot deceive me, or from clear and plain Reaſon, or elſe from a poſitive Divine Revelation; which proceeds from him who therefore will not, becauſe he cannot deceive me, being Truth it ſelf; And therefore if the things I would know, be either in their own nature uncertain, as are all future contingencies, and many paſt actions of former Ages, about which I want ſufficient means of a certain information, I can have no knowledge of them; and by conſequence, no obligation upon my mind,

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to believe them, or act according to them. But whereſoever there is a certainty of knowledge, either from Sence, Reaſon, or Divine Revelation, there my mind is not left at liberty; but has an obligation laid upon it, to act, or not to act, according to the commands of that knowledge. And that this is not my private opinion, but agreeable to the greateſt Truth, let the moſt learned Apoſtle *St. Paul* give his teſtimony, in that well known place, *Whatſoever is not of Faith, is Sin.* For by Faith there cannot be meant that ſupernatural Gift and Grace of believing to ſalvation, becauſe every thing to be known or done, is not the object of that Faith: and therefore, as appears by the *fifth Verſe*, by *Faith*, there he underſtands that πληροφορία, that full aſſurance of a mans own mind, which is no other thing but the reſult of a certainty of knowledge of what he ought to do, and is properly oppoſed to that doubting and wavering of a mans mind, occaſioned by the want of knowledge; and therefore he tells us, it is a damnable ſin to do that which I doubt I ought not; *For*, ſaith he, *he that doubteth is damned if he eat, becauſe it is not of Faith;* Rom. 14. ult.

that is, of a full assurance of knowledge that what he does is lawful: for to such a person, till he have a full assurance from a certain knowledge that it is not, it is sin, because for ought he knows it may be so; and the Rule tells him he is to abstain from the very appearance of evil; and Reason tells him, *Tutum est errare à dextra*, it is the best to err on the right hand by abstaining from that, which I am not fully assured of, but it may be sinful: and for this very reason the same Apostle tells us, that the occasion of those mistakes in the Church, about eating things offered in sacrifice to Idols, proceeded from a want of this knowledge: *Howbeit*, saith he, *there is not in every man this knowledge*; and for want of this, he tells them, *their consciences were weak*; that is, their minds were doubtful, and some were of one persuasion, others of another about it.

So that knowledge being of the Essence of Conscience, and certainty being of the Essence of knowledge, it follows, that Conscience properly so called, cannot be exercised, but about such things as are certainly known, and therefore absolutely necessary to be believed or done;

done; which plainly ſhews the unwarrantable doctrine and practice of ſome men, who impoſe many things upon People as indiſpenſible matter of Conſcience, which in their own nature admit of the greateſt doubt and uncertainty, and which they have no lawful authority to eſtabliſh, as obligatory to the Minds and Conſciences of Men.

But to confirm this, Secondly, let us examine the manner of operation and acting of Conſcience in all Men: Now the excerciſe of Conſcience, conſiſts in theſe two things: Firſt, I inquire with my ſelf whether I have done what I ought, or abſtained from what I ought? Secondly, I inquire, If I have done or abſtained as I ought, whether I have done it after that manner, and with thoſe due circumſtances as I ought? Now in both theſe operations, the neceſſity of them is the Rule, and the foundation of that neceſſity, is my certain knowledge that they are ſo: for thus I judge, I have done this, becauſe I certainly know in obedience to the Rule, I ought to do it: I have abſtained from that, becauſe I certainly know, that I ought of neceſſity not to do it: I have done it after this manner, be-

cauſe I am certainly aſſured that this was according to the way directed by my Rule; therefore my Conſcience, that is my power of judging my ſelf, pronounces for me, that I have done right and well: and then my Mind or Conſcience being ſatisfied, I am at eaſe and quiet within my ſelf; and this is called *a good Conſcience*, or *peace of Conſcience*. On the contrary, when I have done either what I certainly know I ought not, or but doubt I ought not to have done; or omitted what I am aſſured I ought to have done; or where I have not done what I ought to do, according as I ought to have done it, for the manner of performance, with all due circumſtances; my *Conſcience* tells me, I have not done well, or according to my knowledge, and therefore my mind is unquiet and unſatisfied, haunted with guilt of the evil, and terrified with the fearful expectation of puniſhment; and this is called an *evil Conſcience*, or to ſpeak more properly, *a Conſcience of evil*. But if there be no command to act, or to abſtain, nor any directions for the manner and circumſtances of my Actions, I find no certainty of knowledge, and ſo no abſolute neceſſity within

within my ſelf to act, or not to act; to abſtain, or not to abſtain; or if I do any ſuch action where I am left at liberty, I find no neceſſity of doing it this way, or the other, but am left to my own freedom, becauſe I have no certainty of knowledge from the Rule to determine me: ſo that if I do it, my *Conſcience* does not accuſe me; if I do it not, I find no uneaſie guilt to ſit heavy upon my mind for the neglect; and what way ſoever I perform it, ſtill my mind is at peace and quiet with it ſelf; and all becauſe there is no certainty of knowledge from the Rule, and therefore no neceſſity or determination, and ſo by plain conſequence, no part of the dominion of *Conſcience*, for this neceſſity of knowledge is the *Law of Conſcience*, and *where there is no Law, there can be no tranſgreſſion*, no obligation, nor afflicting guilt. Rom. 4. 15.

Let not any perſon now think, that I have ſtraitned the Dioceſs of this Univerſal Biſhop, or, to ſpeak without offence, this Overſeer of the World; for thus far his proper and abſolute Juriſdiction does extend it ſelf: But *Conſcience* has likewiſe a collateral domi-

nion over all indifferent Actions, which is thus. All our Actions which may be done, or not done, without ſin on either part, are called Indifferent: As for example, If for my health or pleaſure I deſign to take the Air, it is indifferent whether I ride, or walk, or whether I go into that fair Field, or this freſh Meadow. Now all theſe actions, though in their own Nature free and indifferent, have yet this neceſſity upon them, that they ought to carry a reſpect to the forementioned great deſigns of Gods glory, and the happineſs of the Univerſe, and therefore ought to be addreſſed to thoſe ends and managed accordingly: and if any indifferent action does not in ſome meaſure contribute to theſe ends, I am bound in Conſcience not to do it: Which ſeems to be the reaſon of the great ſeverity our Saviour pronounces againſt idle words, not onely ſuch as are contrary to thoſe ends, but ſuch as by their being uncapable of contributing to thoſe great deſigns, are therefore ſinful and unlawful, becauſe uſeleſs and unprofitable. Thus for me to ride or walk to take the benefit of the freſh

Matth. 12. 36.

freſh and free air, though in its own nature free, and left to my choice; yet I have this obligation upon me, that I ought to chooſe that part, which either from my own, or better judgments, may be thought moſt proper, and conducive to my health, that ſo I may be in a better capacity to praiſe and glorifie my Creator, for, and by the advantage of health, ſtrength, vigour, and alacrity of Mind and Body; and that by theſe I may be enabled, both for my own part, to participate of the bountiful happineſs, which kind Heaven has ſo plentifully beſtowed upon this life; and alſo, that I may be in a better capacity to promote and advance the happineſs of my fellow Creatures, ſo far as my power does extend it ſelf: and therefore in order to this, I am not to be injurious to any perſon, nor in taking the Air, to ride or walk over the eared Corn, or full grown Meadows; and all this not onely out of an obligation to Humane Laws, or for fear of an Action of Treſpaſs, a *Clauſum fregit*, or *Pedibus ambulando*; but for Conſcience ſake, becauſe I am bound by the Rule, to *do good to all*,

but injury to none. And this truly explains the meaning of St. *Paul*, in those two places, *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, let all be done for the glory of God.* And, *Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin:* that is, Whatsoever indifferent action I do, I ought to have a full assurance, that it is not contrary, but conducive to this great design of the glory of God, in the happiness of the Creation.

1 Cor. 10. 31.

Rom. 14. ult.

CHAP. VI.

The occasion of those Differences amongst us, about matters of Conscience, proceeds from the mistake of Opinion, and private persuasion for Conscience. What Opinion is, and Persuasion? and how they differ from Conscience?

THus far I think it is clear what Conscience is, and how far its proper Dominion does extend. Now that Conscience thus rightly understood, does universally and absolutely oblige all men, I cannot think there are any will make the least scruple; unless it be such, whose Consciences are

are ſeared with an hot Iron, and given up to that unthinking ſence, which the Apoſtle ſpeaks of; and to thoſe who are paſt feeling, I do not addreſs my ſelf, or this Diſcourſe. But the misfortune of our Age does not lie in this particular; we may have ſome of thoſe who have no Conſcience; but we have multitudes of others, who are ſo far from having none, that they are all Conſcience, who ſtrain at every Gnat, and make every thing a ſcruple and matter of Conſcience in the ſtricteſt ſenſe: I do heartily wiſh, whilſt they do ſo, that they do not ſwallow many a Camel, and in the end make ſhipwrack of true Faith, Charity, and by conſequence, of a good Conſcience. For ſuch as theſe are, were theſe Papers intended, with all Chriſtian tenderneſs and compaſſion; if poſſible to give them a right underſtanding of what is ſo infinite dear and tender to them: for to my certain knowledge, as by much experience, and frequent conferences with many of them, I am able to affirm, moſt of this ſort of People, who pretend to be acted by Conſcience in every thing, are not

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yet able to give a tollerable account what Conſcience is: 'Tis ſomething within them, but they know not what: ſome of them, I am confident, are ſo ſtupid, as to believe it to be ſome living thing within them, diſtinct from both Soul and Body. And I remember a Quaker, to whom I put the Queſtion a little haſtily, *What was Conſcience?* after he had ſhewn his great ſurprize and ignorance, by being in every joynt a Quaker, and the firſt that ever I ſaw do the trick, he very confidently, as well as blaſphemouſly told me, it was the *Spirit of the Lord.* I demanded if he meant the *Holy Ghoſt*, the Third Perſon in the *Bleſſed Trinity?* To which he anſwered, *Yea.* Which makes me fear, that more, who are not of his perſuaſion, yet may be of his ſenſe, and believe what they call Conſcience within them, to be ſome Omnipotent thing, to which every thing ought to bow and obey.

There have been, and will be in all Ages, ſome men who do ill, with a deſign and knowledge of doing ill: others there are, who do ill, with a deſign of doing well: to both theſe it is, that we may aſcribe thoſe unhappy diviſions amongſt

amonſt us, under the pretence of Conſcience. And had they taken half that pains and care rightly to inſtruct People what Conſcience is, that they have done, poſitively to tell them, This is matter of Conſcience, and that no man can do with a ſafe Conſcience; whilſt in truth, they were either not matter of Conſcience, in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe; or if they were, they were ſuch matter of Conſcience, as all people were obliged to act in, contrary to both their Doctrine and Practiſe; I ſay, had they done this which was their Duty, they might have done God good ſervice, and promoted our common happineſs, by Peace, Unity, and Charity: which now, to the great diſhonour and decay of Chriſtian Religion and true Piety, and irreparable miſchiefs in our Politick capacities, are almoſt grown ſtrangers amongſt us. For whoſoever ſhall, without partiality, conſider the affairs of theſe Nations, for this laſt Century, ſhall find, That *Liberty of Conſcience* has introduced amongſt us the Synagogue of the *Libertines*, which now has more Votaries than the true Religion, and all others put together.

There are two things which of late have

have been obtruded upon us, (whether ignorantly or maliciously, God he knows) under the ſpecious name of *Conſcience*; and theſe are, *Opinion* and *Perſuaſion*: To this luckleſs Mother, and fatal Daughter, we ow all thoſe diviſions, that ſtrife, thoſe bitter envyings, debate, variance, and in truth, all thoſe intollerable miſchiefs, under which, both Church and State have, for many years, ſo heavily groan'd, and ſo deeply ſuffer'd. Some men, it is to be feared, out of Pride, Avarice, Ambition, or deſire of Novelty, having embraced ſuch Opinions, as were moſt ſuitable to their private Intereſt or Deſigns, preſently uſurp Heaven's Royal Prerogative, and ſtamp theſe courſer Metalls with the Divine Impreſs of *Conſcience*; which immediately makes them currant Coin amongſt vulgar and undiſtinguiſhing Judgments. Theſe Opinions, countenanced by the ſucceſs of numerous Diſciples, and warranted by zealous Defenders, and over-eager Promoters, grew amongſt many into firm Perſwaſions; and having been rooted by long continuance, and naturalized by Cuſtom, then they

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muſt be matters of Conſcience, then they muſt be obliging to all, and give indiſpenſible laws to all: then they are to be defended, and maintained with Life and Fortune, and ſupported with no leſs rigorous Penalties than *Eternal Damnation*, to all thoſe who will not fall down and worſhip this golden Image of *Conſcience*.

I will therefore endeavour to ſhew, what Opinion, and what Perſuaſion are; and how they differ from *Conſcience*; how far they do oblige; and wherein their lawful right and dominion, in the management of humane Actions do conſiſt.

Let us act like Men and Chriſtians, with prudence and juſtice; let us *render to* Cæſar *the things that are* Cæſars, *and to GOD the things that are GODS*; let us not blindly, injuriouſly, and dangerouſly, transfer the *Title*, *Dignity*, *Power*, and *Supremacy* of *Conſcience*, the immediate *Vicegerent* of our *Almighty Sovereign*, unto theſe two *Uſurpers*, who in reality, are but his *Subjects*.

I will begin therefore with *Opinion*, as being the elder of the two: And that you may know, that it is far infe-

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rior unto *Conſcience*, this is the deſcription which the learned *Aquinas* gives of it, *Opinio eſt diſpoſitio ad Scientiam*, it is a diſpoſition to Knowledge; that is, *Opinion* is an imperfect degree of Knowledge, where ſtill there is a liberty to doubt or ſupect that this or that *Opinion*, may not be exactly true: As for Example, that the *Sun* ſhines at high Noon, this is demonſtrative knowledge; but becauſe the *Sun* when it ſhines, does communicate both light and heat; that therefore the *Sun* is a vaſt Globe of Fire, this is but *Opinion*; becauſe it may be ſo, and it may not be ſo. Or that the *Moon* is peopled with Inhabitants, is but *Opinion*, becauſe being capable of doubt; I can have no way to aſcertain my ſelf, of the truth of either of theſe, whether in reality, the *Sun* be a Ball of Flame, or the *Moon* another habitable Region: ſo that *Opinion* is that private judgment which a Man makes of things or actions which are of an indifferent nature, without any certainty of knowledge, where he wants the aſſiſtance of ſome rule or way, and means, to attain to ſuch a certainty. And that I may not give only inſtances of Philoſophy; thus,

thus, that there is ſuch a place as Hell, the reſidence of the *damned*, is a matter of knowledge, as being of *Divine Revelation*, beſides that it is founded upon the reaſon of rewards and puniſhments in a future eſtate: But whether the Fire of Hell be material, or figurative, or both, theſe are matters of *Opinion*; and it is indifferent to believe either or both, becauſe I am not poſitively directed to believe either of them, more than the other; neither if I do believe one of them, rather than the other, is any other Man obliged to believe it, upon my affirmation of one part to be my *Opinion*; but is ſtill left at his liberty, ſo he believe any, to follow that part of the *Opinion*, which to him appears moſt probable; and the reaſon is, becauſe I want a certain *Rule* to determine me, there being no Divine Revelation of it, nor any way or means to attain to a demonſtrative knowledge of it; and further, in its own nature it appears indifferent, whether thoſe infernal Flames be material, or figurative, or both; ſince whatſoever they are, *God Almighty* is thereby able to accompliſh his deſign, which is the puniſhment of the

the fallen Angels, and ſuch of mankind, as muſt there be eternally miſerable and tormented, becauſe they would not accept of happineſs upon Gods terms and conditions.

Come we now from *Opinion*, to *Perſuaſion*; which as before was ſaid, is the *Child of Opinion:* and is nothing more but that belief, which a man embraces of any *Opinion* in indifferent things or actions, which are undetermined, by any certain way, or rule of knowledge, where the mind follows that part which appears moſt probable and likely to be true; ſo that in *Perſuaſion*, as well as *Opinion*, there is no abſolute certainty of knowledge to determine the mind, only Men ſit down with that as a determination for the preſent, which carries the faireſt appearance of Truth, and with that reſt ſatisfied; though ſtill they reſerve to themſelves a liberty to change their *Judgment* and *Perſuaſion*, ſo ſoon as a clearer evidence, or better way to find out the Truth about which they are uncertain, offers it ſelf unto them. Thus to one Man, the flames of Hell appear moſt probably to be material fire, becauſe the Bodies of the dam-

damned, as well as their Souls, muſt be there moſt exquiſitely tormented, and for that purpoſe, he thinks this ſort of fire moſt proper; and therefore that part of the *Opinion*, paſſes with him into his *Perſuaſion*. To another, who conſiders that the condemned Spirits, and Souls of Men which are of an immaterial ſubſtance, muſt there be puniſhed as well as their Bodies, a figurative Fire appears moſt probable, and that is his *Perſuaſion*. To a third, who conſiders, that both Souls, Bodies, and the wicked Spirits, muſt have their ſhare of pain and torment, both a figurative and material Fire ſeem moſt agreeable to the deſign, and therefore that is his *Perſuaſion*.

So that the difference between *Opinion* and *Perſuaſion*, ſeems to be no more than this, whil'ſt I embrace, with an equal indifference, either part of a doubtful thing, it is but *Opinion*. When from the greater probability, I paſs to a determination of my mind, then it is my particular *Perſuaſion*.

The difference between matter of *Conſcience*, and matter of *Opinion*, or *Perſuaſion*, is That what is matter of *Conſcience*, is always certainly known,

and therefore absolutely necessary to be believed or done, or abstained from. What is matter of *Opinion*, or *Persuasion*, is not clearly and certainly known, but admits of doubting, and therefore is not absolutely necessary, but in its own nature indifferent to be believed or done.

CHAP. VII.

How far Men are obliged by Opinion, *or private* Persuasion; *and what influence these have upon Humane Affairs.*

HAving now shewn what *Conscience*, *Opinion*, and *Persuasion* are, and how they differ one from another; it follows in the next place, that we shew how far these two last do oblige any person in the management of humane Actions relating to *Divinity*.

First therefore, every Man is obliged by his private *Opinion* or *Persuasion*, only in things indifferent in their own nature, and undetermined; which is the proper sphere of their activity, to act, or not to act; to believe, or not to believe; so far as in acting or believing, he does

not contradict a known *Rule of Conſcience*, which is an abſolutely neceſſary Duty. Now the great and general Rule of all our Faith and Actions, being Gods Glory, and, in order to that, by our Obedience to his Commands to that purpoſe, to promote the happineſs of the Univerſe, both here and hereafter, it is very eaſie for any perſon, in any part of his Belief, or in any of his Actions, to ſee whether they have a reſpect to theſe ends; for if they have not, they certainly croſs the great deſign and intention of our *Almighty Creator*, to whoſe *Will* we owe all ready Obedience; and then, by neceſſary conſequence, they become abſolutely unlawful. Thus ſuppoſe I am of *Opinion*, for very good and religious conſiderations, that I ought to keep one day in the week a voluntary day of *Faſting* or *Abſtinence*, and I chooſe *Monday* as an indifferent day; I am obliged by my own private *Perſuaſion* to keep that day ſo; but neither my *Perſuaſion*, nor *Example*, can have any influence to oblige others to do ſo, who are not of the ſame *Perſuaſion* with me: But if either a Command from my lawful *Superiors* forbid

me *Abſtinence* on that day, or enjoyn it to be obſerved as a *Feſtival*; or if I find, that by *Faſting* I impair my health or ſtrength, I am then obliged to obſerve it no longer as a day of *Faſting*, becauſe then my private *Perſuaſion* would croſs a certain known *Rule of Conſcience*, by diſobedience to *lawful Authority*. And I ſhould alſo be injurious, both to my ſelf, and, it may be, to many others, who may have a dependance upon my life and well-being; whereby I ſhould act contrary to the *Will of God*, who would have me, by all lawful and prudent ways and means, to promote my own happineſs even in this life; and all theirs, with whom I have a Concern, ſo far as I am able by juſt and honeſt endeavors.

Secondly, every Mans private *Opinion* and *Perſuaſion* obliges him ſo far, as in the determination of his Belief, and Actions, it follows the better, more ſure, and warrantable part. Now the better, and more warrantable part of our judgment and determination in indifferent things and actions, is firſt, that which has the Conſent, Judgment, Approbation, Example, or Practice of the beſt Men, in all Ages, as neareſt to the neceſſary

ſary Rule of Life and Actions. But becauſe this cannot ſo eaſily be known, or found out, eſpecially by the unlearned and ordinary ſort of People, who have neither opportunity nor ability to diſcover what the Judgment and Practice of the beſt Men in forepaſt Ages has been, by ſearching the Hiſtories and ancient Records of former Times; therefore ſecondly, that is the better, more ſure, and warrantable part of our *Judgment*, in indifferent matters of *Opinion* or *Perſuaſion*, which follows the judgment of *Charity*, *Peace*, *Unity*, and, by ſo doing, contributes moſt to Gods glory, by promoting the happineſs of all Men, both here and hereafter: for theſe are univerſal Rules, and known Commands, and therefore neceſſary to be obſerved, being given us for the guidance and management of our Actions in general. Now there is no Man that has the free uſe of his Reaſon, and will make uſe of it, but may eaſily diſcover, whether any of his Actions are agreeable, or contrary to theſe *Rules*, and this great End.

So that it appears plainly, how different the *Obligation of Conſcience* is, from that of *Opinion*, or *Private Perſuaſion*.

Conſcience obliges all Men, always, at all times, and in all places, univerſally and abſolutely, they being known, evident, and certain Duties, which are thereby commanded. *Opinion* and *Perſuaſion* oblige only ſome private Perſons, in ſome Caſes, and at ſome Times, and never further than they have a juſt reſpect to ſome general *Rules of Conſcience*, in regard they are not ſo certainly known, but that they may admit of Doubt, and have a poſſibility of being other than they appear, or ought to be.

CHAP. VIII.

The Differences betwixt the Church of England, *and all Diſſenters, brought into Examination, by the forementioned Rules of* Conſcience, Opinion *and* Perſuaſion.

IT is a Divine, as well as Mathematical Truth, *Rectum eſt menſura ſui & obliqui*, a right Line ſhews both its own ſtraightneſs, and the crookedneſs of that which is oblique: Having therefore ſhewn this *Rule of Truth*, and which I have not in the leaſt endeavoured to warp

warp or bend, ſo as to fit any private or ſiniſter deſign of my own, or of any Party, let us now lay it to the Work, and it will quickly diſcover, who are *the Workmen that need not be aſhamed, who have rightly divided the Word of Truth*; and *have built upon that good foundation, Gold, Silver, precious Stones, in beauty far ſuperior to the poliſhed corners of the Temple:* And who are they that have built Straw, Hay, and Stubble, ſuch combuſtible ſtuff, as has ſet the glorious Fabrick of the *Church* into flames of *Contention*, and which, to the loſs of the Builders, muſt be burnt up; though they themſelves may be ſaved, ſo as by fire, provided they did it ignorantly, and not of malicious wickedneſs, yet their work muſt periſh.

2 Tim. 2. 15. 1 Cor. 3. 12, 13, 15.

We will therefore conſider the moſt material, and chief things, which are in difference amongſt us, and, by an impartial applying of this *Golden Rule of Conſcience*, ſee who come neareſt the Truth and Right.

I do purpoſely avoid the knotty *Queſtions of Divinity*, and the different *Opinions* about them, in regard, that theſe may be diverſly believed and

maintained without breach of *Communion*; and I know there are, and have been many eminent Men in the Church of God, who have wholly differ'd in their judgments, about some abstruse Points of *Divinity*, without prejudicing the *Peace* and *Unity* either of the *Church* or *State:* in regard they defended them only as their private Persuasions, and were both too modest, prudent, and charitably honest, to disturb the Peace and Quiet of the *Church* or *State*, by endeavouring to impose their particular judgments in things not clear and evident, as necessary *Doctrines* of *Faith*, or *Practice*, upon the *Consciences* of all other Men.

The main and grand Differences between the Church of *England*, and all those who have separated themselves from her Communion, so far as I am able to discover by the Writings of the several *Parties*, are either about the *Government* it self, or about the circumstances and manner of *Worship*.

That there ought to be *Government* in the *Church*, I suppose all *Parties* will readily acknowledge, because a great Apostle tells us, *God is the God of Order,*

1 Cor. 14. 33, 39.

and

and not of Confuſion, in all the Churches of God; by which it is plain, that that is no *Church of God*, which is not under *Government*; or which countenances *Confuſion*; and therefore the ſame Apoſtle abſolutely commands, *That all things be done decently, and with Order.* The thing that is complained of, is, That this way of *Government*, by the *Epiſcopal Hierarchie*, being no where in plain, and poſitive Words, and Commands, thus ſet down, ordered, and eſtabliſhed in *Scripture*, which is the *Rule of Conſcience*, therefore it ought not to be impoſed tyrannically and imperiouſly, upon Men of weak and tender *Conſciences*; eſpecially, when another, and better way of *Government*, more agreeable to the *Scriptures*, and *Primitive ſimplicity* of the *Goſpel*, is now found out, and diſcovered. For though *Government*, in its own Nature be abſolutely neceſſary, yet where *God* does not interpoſe any *poſitive* Command, or Directions, as he did concerning the *Jewiſh Church*, there this or that *Government* are equally indifferent, and the beſt is to be choſen and preferred before the reſt.

How weak a Plea and Refuge this is, to

to call for and expect plain and expreſs Words, Commands, or Directions from *Scripture* for every thing we do or believe, every Man muſt acknowledge who does but conſider, that we owe even the Belief of ſome of the Articles of our Faith to conſequences from *Scripture*, and not to plain, poſitive, and expreſs words: As for Example, that of the Myſtery of the *Glorious Trinity in Unity, three Perſons, but one God*; which words are not to be found in all the *Holy Canon.* How much more unreaſonable is it then, to expect expreſs Words and Commands of *Scripture* for *Government* in the *Church*, which is of a far more inferior Concern than *Faith*? And how dangerous a matter it is, to admit of this Propoſition, *That nothing is to be believed or done, for which there cannot be brought a clear and poſitive place of Scripture*, let all Chriſtians judge: And whether, if it were as heartily practiſed, as it is by ſome Men vigorouſly preſt, it would not root out the very foundation of all *Religion*?

But we will joyn iſſue with them upon the Point, and give them a fair tryal at the *Bar of Conſcience*, their own *Judge*,

Judge, upon their own *Aſſertion*: If therefore *Government*, being undetermined by *Scripture*, be indifferent whether this or that; and the beſt to be preferred; How ſhall it be determined, and by what Authority, which way of *Government* in the *Church* is the beſt? For till there be ſuch a determination, as before has been made appear, it can be no more than *Private Opinion*, and therefore can lay no more *Obligation* upon any Mans *Conſcience* to yield Obedience to it, than any other particular Perſuaſion does, which can only oblige thoſe who are of the ſame Perſuaſion, and only ſo long as they continue ſo, and no longer, nor any others who are not ſo perſuaded; and therefore by the *Rule of Liberty of Conſcience*, are free, and ought not to be impoſed upon, for fear of wounding their *tender Conſciences*; which is the direct and ready way to have as many ſeveral *Governments* and *diſtinct Churches*, as there are Men of *ſeveral Minds* and *Perſuaſions* about which is the Beſt; it being certain, that if Men be left to their *liberty*, every Man abounding in his own ſence, will eſteem beſt of his own way, and according

to

to the Proverb, *Every Crow will think his own Bird faireſt*; which, in plain *Engliſh*, at laſt muſt amount to *Anarchy*, inſtead of *Unity*; and *Confuſion*, in the room of that *Decency* and *Order* which God expects and requires in all his Churches. For the *Scriptures* leave it in ſuſpence, and at leaſt are ſilent as to moſt particularities of *Government*, there being no more plain and expreſs words for any ſort of *Government*, which any of the *Diſſenters* would eſtabliſh, than there are for that againſt which they contend; and all *Parties* will plead the *Scriptures*, ſpeak as much, or more, for their way of Government, than for any other.

Let us therefore try who will have the advantage, and bid faireſt for ſuch a determination, as ſhall oblige all mens Conſciences, according to the forementioned Rules, how any indifferent matters of *Opinion* or *Perſuaſion* (ſuch as the Queſtion in diſpute muſt be, according as they have ſtated it) become neceſſary and obligatory to all mens Conſciences.

First therefore, we have reaſon to believe, that the way of Government now

now eſtabliſh'd in the Church of *England*, is the beſt, becauſe we find it does not contradict any known Rule or poſitive Command of Scripture; but, on the contrary, all its Commands, Directions, Doctrine, and Practice, are founded upon, and derived, if not from plain words, (as moſt of them are) yet from moſt evident ſence, and conſequences of Scripture; which, as before was intimated concerning the Articles of Faith, are as obligatory to Conſcience, as Scripture it ſelf.

Secondly, This way of Government, as it is now eſtabliſhed, appears to follow the better, more ſure and warrantable part of our Judgment, in indifferent things, ſo as to make them become obliging, and that in both its branches; *viz.* Firſt, it is agreeable to the Judgment, Approbation, Example, and Practiſe of the beſt men in all Ages, from the Apoſtolick times, as will be evident to all, who ſhall, without partiality, peruſe the Scriptures themſelves, where there are many not imperfect traces and footſteps of this way of Government, ſo far eſtabliſhed, as the Powers of the Heathen Governments, who then had all

all the Civil and Temporal Juriſdiction would permit. But there is a whole Cloud of *Witneſſes* for it, in the univerſal conſent, practiſe, approbation, and defence, of all thoſe holy men from the Apoſtles times; who though not divinely inſpired, yet were men of ſuch eminent Integrity and Piety, as would not permit them to write any thing directly contrary to the Primitive truth, which ſome of them did immediately receive from the mouths of the Apoſtles and Diſciples of our Lord; and many of them were ſuch, as by Martyrdom did, with their deareſt blood, ſet their Seals to the teſtimony of Jeſus. Such who lived in thoſe Ages, before *Rome* and her Biſhops ever thought of uſurping the Title of *Univerſal*, and therefore cannot be thought guilty of any combination with them, in erecting or impoſing this way of *Government* upon the *Chriſtian World*. Secondly, The Determination of the Judgment, that this way of Government is the beſt, follows the better, more ſure and warrantable part, *viz.* the Judgment of Charity, Peace, and Unity: Charity, with the firſt, beſt, and

and paſt Ages of the Church, who all lived and dyed under Obedience to this way of Government; of all which glorious Martyrs, Saints, and Confeſſors, it were the moſt uncharitable opinion to judge and condemn them, as being guilty of living and dying in, defending, maintaining, and practiſing a way of Government altogether unagreeable and contrary to the Word and Will of God; as all Diſſenters would perſuade the World, whilſt they tell them, this Government is unlawful and Antichriſtian. It follows likewiſe Peace and Unity, both with that part of the Church which is now Triumphant, and with the Univerſal Church Militant, over all the World, who, except ſome few of the Diſciples of *Calvin*, all agree in this way of Government.

Laſtly, We have reaſon to believe this way of Government to be the beſt, in regard that it does, more than any other whatſoever, promote the great deſigns of the glory of Almighty God, and the happineſs of mankind, here, by Piety, Peace, Juſtice, and Unity, in order

order to their eternal happineſs hereafter; following herein the Doctrine, Commands, and Example of the bleſſed Jeſus, and his holy Apoſtles, without turning to the right hand or to the left.

Beſides, We have other very ſtrong inducements to perſuade us, that this Government in the Church is the beſt, as being that which by Gods own appointment and approbation, was eſtabliſhed in the very Infancy of the Church, by the Divinely inſpired Apoſtles; and for this belief, theſe amongſt many others, are very probable and perſuaſive Reaſons.

Firſt, The great bleſſings which God has imparted to the World under this way of Government by Epiſcopacy; for it is notoriouſly known, that all the World, which did embrace the Chriſtian Faith, received it with, and from this Government.

Secondly, which is very remarkable, and a confirmation of the former; It is impoſſible to find any Church, which wears an ancient Name, and pretends to be of Primitive Converſion to the Faith of Chriſt, but how much ſoever they

they may have degenerated in other things, yet ſtill they retain this way of Government: witneſs the *Roman*, *Greek*, *Armenian*, and even the barbarous *Ruſſian* and *Æthiopian* Churches, who though in other matters they differ as wide in Opinion, as in Climate, which, according to the Adage, is *toto Cælo*; yet in this they do all moſt harmoniouſly agree, retaining both the Name, Dignity, and Office of Biſhops, as the Governours of the Church amongſt them: And I do not know any one thing, except the Canon of the Holy Writings, which contain the Fundamentals of our Faith, which Heaven has appeared ſo ſolicitous to preſerve unaltered and uncorrupted, as this way of Government in the whole Chriſtian World.

Laſtly, This very argument, which with ſo much pomp and triumphant ſolemnity, is perpetually, by all Diſſenters, urged as invincible and unanſwerable, if it be well examined, will depoſe plainly for Epiſcopacy, and that there is no poſitive Rule or Command in Scripture for it, is as ſtrong, and, it may be, a more powerful argument for it, than they who make uſe of it are

aware of. And the true Reaſon why in Scripture there is no more ſaid to juſtifie it, with the higheſt probability, may be believed to be, becauſe with a *Nemine contradicente*, it was by an unqueſtioned conſent acknowledged by all thoſe who did embrace the Chriſtian Faith; and there were none found then, nor in many Ages after, ſo impious or audacious to oppoſe or contradict it. And had there been any thing in the Government, either unreaſonable, or contrary to the will of God, the Jews and Heathens, whoſe hatred made them curiouſly inquiſitive into whatſoever might appear a defect in Chriſtian Religion, would certainly, with their quick-ſighted malice, have diſcovered it, the diſcovery of which would have imported as much as they did deſire, that was the ſubverſion of the Church from the very foundation. But ſo great was the Unity of the Chriſtians in this point, and ſo excellent and irreprehenſible did the Government appear, that in all the oppoſition Religion met withall, though not an Article of the Faith could eſcape their cenſures, we do not meet with any thing againſt this way of Government;

ment; and well it was there was then ſuch Unity: for could thoſe Enemies of our Religion have met with half thoſe diviſions, which now Chriſtians have made amongſt themſelves, they would certainly (without the aſſiſtance of a Miracle to preſerve it) have improved them to the utter ruine of the Church, to which there is no Road leads ſo directly, as that which undermines the Government. In ſhort, I do heartily wiſh, that all thoſe who are ſo zealouſly, it were well if I might not ſay furiouſly, bent and oppoſite againſt Root and Branch of Epiſcopacy, would conſider ſeriouſly at what they ſtrike, and whether they do not really affront him, who, as the Root of it, is by St. *Peter* ſtyled, *the great Shepherd and Biſhop of our Souls.* 1 Pet. 2. 25.

CHAP. IX.

The pretences of Diſſenters, that their ways of Government are the beſt, and to be preferred before Epiſcopacy, examined and tried by the ſame Rules above-mentioned concerning indifferent Things and Actions.

LEt us now ſee any other form of Government in the Church, which can make ſo fair, ſo true, ſo juſt a plea for it ſelf as *Epiſcopacy* has done; whether *Presbyterian*, *Independant*, *Anabaptiſt*, *Quaker*, or any other of what name or diſtinction ſoever, who diſſent from the Church of *England*, and flie from her Communion, upon the account of the preſent Government by Biſhops.

Firſt, There is not any of theſe that can ſhew expreſs words, or commands of Scripture, for that way of Government, which they would introduce: And therefore they are unjuſt to us, whilſt they cry up their own way, and endeavour to impoſe it upon the world, as matter of Conſcience; ſince, as before has been proved, nothing can be ſo

ſo in its own nature, for which there is not a plain and poſitive command, or a natural and true conſequence from *Scripture* the *Rule* of *Conſcience.*

Or admitting their Propoſition, That all *Governments* being in their own nature indifferent, and the beſt to be preferred; how does theirs appear to be the beſt? I hope they are better reconciled to common Senſe, Reaſon, and Cuſtom, than to think their own Aſſertion or Teſtimony ſufficient to convince us that it is ſo; ſince the Son of God, who was Truth it ſelf, yet tells us, *If I bear witneſs of my ſelf, my witneſs is not true*; that is, if he had no other witneſs: And therefore he refers the unbelieving *Jews* to *John*, whom all men accounted a Prophet; to the Scriptures, which he bids them ſearch; to *Moſes*, in whom they truſted; and in another place, to his miracles and wonderful works, which they ſaw with their own eyes. Joh. 5. 31.

Come we therefore to the common Rule; and it is no more but juſt, that they ſhould receive the ſame meaſure, and ſtand to the determination of the ſame Judge, to whom they have made their Appeal.

In the ſecond place therefore, Every one of theſe ways of Government which they would eſtabliſh, with the ruine of the preſent, contradict a known Rule, nay, many plain Commands of Scripture; for whilſt they go about to overthrow the old Government, and introduce a new One, they are *diſobedient to thoſe that have the rule over them*, both in Church and State, whom they found veſted with that Authority, and which, for any thing they are able to prove to the contrary, was of Gods own appointment, for ſo ſaith St. *Paul*, *The powers that be are ordained of God*; even thoſe Heathen and truly Antichriſtian Powers: how much more then the Supporters and Defenders of the Chriſtian Faith? They reſiſt an Authority, warranted with long ſucceſſion, ſupported with many prudent and ancient Laws; Laws to which they themſelves, and their Anceſtors, by their free Repreſentatives in Parliament, had given their Vote and Suffrage; and therefore, by their own voluntary Act and Deed, (and ſome of them by the ſtricter obligations of moſt Sacred and repeated Oaths) they were bound with the ſtrongeſt ties of Conſcience

ſcience to live under, in all dutyful obedience; which St. *Paul* enjoyns under the pain of Damnation, the ſevereſt of all the penalties God Almighty can inflict upon Mankind: and therefore he tells them, they *muſt needs be ſubject for Conſcience ſake.*

Thirdly, in their determination, that their way or form of Church Government is the beſt, they do not follow the better, more ſure and warrantable part of judgment in indifferent things. Let them ſhew us in all Antiquity, (except ſome miſtranſlated places in the *Engliſh New Teſtament*, where *Presbyters* are falſly rendred *Elders*) the leaſt footſteps, approbation, defence, or practice of any other manner of Government in the Church for this Sixteen hundred years and upwards, beſides the Epiſcopal; if they can do this, then they may lawfully pretend, they do not overthrow the Old, but revive it, by overthrowing the New Model of Government; but if they cannot, as I am ſure if it could have been done, we had heard it on both ſides of our ears long before this; let them dread the fearful doom which the wiſe *Solomon* pronounces againſt thoſe

Prov. 24. 22. who remove the ancient *Land-marks*, and are given to *change*; *for their calamity ſhall come ſuddenly, and who knoweth the ruine of them both?* Both of thoſe who fear not God, becauſe they fear not their lawful King his Vicegerent; but are given to change, delighted with Novelties and Innovations.

Laſtly, this their determination is far from the judgment of Charity, Peace and Unity, either with the paſt or preſent Ages; and much further from promoting the great deſigns of Gods glory, and the happineſs of Mankind either here or hereafter. Let all *Europe* witneſs this ſad Truth; and particularly theſe *Britiſh Iſles*, which by this beſt way of Government, of ancient *Albion*, White and Happy, was changed into *Aceldama*, a diſmal Field of Blood; it were endleſs to recount what Wars, Rapine, Sacriledge, Deſolation and Confuſion, Bloodſhed, and moſt unparallel'd *Solemn Murder of Majeſty*, the moſt ſacred thing on earth; have been the effects of endeavouring to ſet up, and eſtabliſh theſe new ways of Church Government. And wherever any of theſe new Diſciplines did prevail, they quickly verified the

Advice

Advice of young *Rhehoboam's* hot-headed Counſellors, making their little Fingers, heavier than the Loins of Epiſcopacy: and changing the Whips, with which thoſe Reverend Fathers chaſtiſed ſuch as really deſerved it, into Scorpions, Axes and Halters; nor did they ſpare either Life or Fortune that ſtood in their way, or durſt oppoſe them: And this was the true reaſon, why even thoſe perſons, who were ſo violent againſt Root and Branch of Epiſcopacy, notwithſtanding their *Solemn League and Covenant*, yet their Wiſdom, Fear, or Policy, would never give them leave to eſtabliſh *Presbytery*, which they found a Government ſo imperious, abſolute, and inſupportable.

Nor is this fair and honeſt dealing, in Diſſenters; to pretend that becauſe all ſorts of Government are indifferent, therefore why ſhould not theirs be choſen which is the beſt? when by experience we have found the contrary, and in the mean time not to allow ours a bare indifferency: but to perſuade their credulous Followers, with the greateſt confidence, that our way of government by Biſhops, is *Popiſh*, *Unlawful*, & *Antichriſtian*, con-

contrary to the *Scriptures*; and that their own way is agreeable to them, and the Primitive Diſcipline of the Church; and therefore as a matter of *Conſcience*, and the main matter too, the one to be avoided, and the other to be embraced by all thoſe who hope for *Salvation of their Souls*. That Cauſe (though it be the *Good Old Cauſe*) betrays it ſelf to be very weak, which is to be ſupported by ſuch unworthy, feeble, and Corner Arts and Arguments, as Pagans, and Heathen Philoſophers would bluſh to have been found guilty of.

As for that common objection of theirs againſt *Lord Biſhops*; we will eaſily grant them, that the Primitive Clergy did not abound in Temporalities; but then, they had ſuch advantages, as, I believe, none of theſe People will be willing to gratifie the moſt beloved of their Paſtors withall, when *they who had poſſeſſions ſold them, and laid down the price at the feet of the Apoſtles*, to diſpoſe of as to them ſeemed moſt fit. This would be a hard ſaying, who would bear it? nor indeed could it be convenient, as the affairs of the World ſtand at preſent. But theſe Honours which the preſent Clergy

Acts. 4. 34.

Clergy do enjoy, being Temporal, are not by us believed to be at all eſſential to the Office of a Biſhop, and are only annexed by the bounty of Princes, as are alſo their Eſtates, for the neceſſary ſupport of the Rank they are in, for the encouragement of Learning and Piety, and for the advantage of the Publick, as it is a Politick Society of Men. And they may as well maintain a Levelling Principle, and quarel with all Honours and Eſtates that are above theirs, as with theſe; for if any Temporal Eſtate or Dignity may, by free Gift or Succeſſion, divolve upon a Church-man, why not theſe? And that this may happen without offence or ſcandal, beſides the experience we have had in an Illuſtrious Peer of this Nation, who, not many years ago, from a private Prieſt, by ſucceſſion, came to the Honour of one of the firſt Earls in *England*. I appeal to themſelves, who would think it the greateſt injuſtice, upon the account of their being Church-men, to loſe a good Temporal Eſtate from their Anceſtors, or a Barony either Deſcent or Royal Bounty. Beſides let all men judge, if this would not be the way to furniſh us with *Jeroboam's* Prieſts, of

Earl of *Kent.*

of the meaneſt and loweſt of the People, not only for Birth, but Learning, Parts, and Ability: And what a diſcouragement it would be to the Gentry and Nobility, who, by their Generous Birth, Advantageous Education, Noble Alliances, and many other Excellent Circumſtances and qualifications, are fitted by the great influence they may have both upon the Prince and People, to do both the Church and State the moſt conſiderable Honour and Service? I am afraid few of them would addict themſelves to the more ſerious and painful Studies of Divinity, if by their devoting themſelves to an immediate attendance upon God's Altar, they muſt caſt off the Entail of Temporal Honours and Eſtates from themſelves. Nor does this derogate a little from the ſuperlative Bounty and Goodneſs of the Divine Nature, to think, that he who does ſo plentifully, frequently, and freely beſtow theſe Honours and Eſtates, as bleſſings, upon, all other Conditions of men, ſhould prohibit and deny them to thoſe, who have voluntarily obliged themſelves to his peculiar Service,

vice, and upon whom he is pleaſed to confer the excellent Title of his *Ambaſſadors*; and therefore moſt certainly does allow them honourably, ſo as to be able to ſupport the Dignity of ſo high a Character: eſpecially ſince they have his Royal word and promiſe for it, *Them that honour me, I will honour.* Prince and Prieſt, were not by God thought inconſiſtent under the Law, in that Government, which he himſelf conſtituted and eſtabliſh'd. And therefore one word in the Hebrew Language ſignifies both. And till ſuch time as he is pleaſed to declare his mind to the contrary, I know not upon what pretence any man ſhould divorce thoſe two, which he had once made one. Neither by virtue of theſe Lordſhips, do Biſhops Lord it over Chriſts Flock, as by the ſcoffing wantonneſs of ſome men (who ſhould be more ſerious, than to be witty at the expence of Scripture) they are ſaid to do: ſince it is clear, that their Temporal Baronies give them not the leaſt influence upon Church affairs, more than they give unto the other Noble Peerage of the Realm.

2 Cor. 5. 20.

1 Sam. 2. 30.

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And

And the Juriſdiction of a Biſhop, as a Biſhop, and a Biſhop as a Baron, are as wholly diſtinct, as that of a Lord of a Manor, or any other Lord is from the power of a Biſhop in his Dioceſs.

1 Tim. 3. 2. In a word, *A Biſhop muſt be given to Hoſpitality*; how ſhall he be able to do that without an Eſtate? If he muſt have an Eſtate, he muſt be Lord of it, for ſo is every man of what he does poſſeſs: and if it ſhall be thought fit by Royal Authority, the Fountain of Honour, to add to that common Right, a more particular and diſtinguiſhing Title of Honour, that may offend ſome mens Ambition or Envy, but can never be found to be either diſadvantageous to the Church or State, or contrary to the Scripture, the *Rule of Conſcience.*

From what hath been ſaid, it appears, that no other way of Government in the Church can really pretend to thoſe advantages, which may make an indifferent thing become neceſſary and obliging to Conſcience, except the Epiſcopal; by which it follows, that to ſubmit to this Form of Government, as it is now eſtabliſh'd in the Church, is

is ſo far from being againſt a good Conſcience, that no man can reſiſt it, without ſinning againſt Conſcience, ſince it has all the qualifications which are neceſſary, for the making an indifferent thing become obligatory to every mans Conſcience, which all the other pretenders want: *viz.* It comes neareſt to the *Rule of Scripture*, it follows the better, more ſure and warrantable part of our judgment; it anſwers all the ends of Government, by promoting the Glory of God, and contributing to the happineſs of mankind here, by procuring Peace, Unity, and Concord; and hereafter, by teaching, commanding, and practiſing true Piety and Holineſs. And it is evident, that to diſſent from this Government, can never be the effect of *Conſcience*, but of *Opinion* or *Perſuaſion*, neither of which can lay any obligation upon mens minds, which is abſolute and indiſpenſible, as before has been made moſt evidently appear.

I wiſh that all Diſſenters would ſeriouſly reflect with themſelves, whilſt they do ſo violently cry up Conſcience, and pretend it for their ſeparation, whether they

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they have not abuſed themſelves and the World, in miſtaking *Opinion* and *Perſuaſion* for it? of which they may eaſily be ſatisfied, by an impartial application of what has before been ſaid of this particular.

After all this, we ſhall difficultly be perſuaded to relinquiſh the Plea of a Divine Right in Epiſcopacy, for which ſo much reaſon has been, and may be brought to prove it; and upon which we ſhall have occaſion briefly to touch hereafter.

CHAP. X.

Of the manner and circumſtances of Divine Worſhip; and how from being indifferent, they may become neceſſary to be done, and obliging to Conſcience.

THus have we ſeen, that though private and falſe *Opinion*, or prejudiced and miſtaken Perſuaſion, and, it may be, malicious Deſign and Intereſt, combined with diſconted Envy, may be loud and clamorous againſt this Government of the Church, by the excellent and ancient way of Epiſcopacy;

pacy; yet Conſcience is ſo far from being againſt it, that it is wholly and clearly for it. Let us now come to examine the manner of performance of Divine Worſhip, which has occaſioned no ſmall ſtirs, tumults, and diviſions amongſt us.

And here likewiſe I ſuppoſe, that all Parties do thus far agree, that there ought to be ſome Modes and Circumſtances in the Worſhip and Service of God; that is, ſome Time, ſome Place, ſome Words, Geſtures, Poſtures, and Habits, for the performance both of Publick and Private Worſhip, which Conſcience tells us we are bound to pay unto Almighty God. Herein likewiſe I ſuppoſe, that all Parties are agreed, that theſe things, or however, ſuch of them as are in controverſie amongſt us, are, in their own natures, indifferent; and therefore properly the ſubject of Opinion or Perſuaſion: and were there no determination on either ſide, provided the Duty of Worſhip were performed, it might be done this way or the other: And from hence likewiſe it appears, that no Circumſtance of Religious Worſhip, is in its own nature ſimply unlawful, becauſe no where in Scripture prohibi-

ted, either in direct words, or by neceſſary conſequence: ſo that no mans Conſcience can be juſtly offended by the performance of any of them, ſince *where there is no Law, there can be no tranſgreſſion.* Let any Diſſenters therefore ſhew, either a poſitive command, or a plain conſequence from Scripture, why I ſhould not ſerve God in a ſet form of Prayers and Praiſes? or why I, or any other perſons, ſhould not perform all the ſeveral Offices in the Book of Divine Service mentioned? Why ſuch Geſtures, Habits, or Signs ſhould not be made uſe of? And then ſomething is ſaid to make them unlawful; then every man, in point of Conſcience, would be obliged to abſtain from them: but till that be done, they will remain in their own natures ſimply indifferent, and ſo far lawful. And ſo long as they are ſo, which will be to the Worlds end, they act falſly and unjuſtly, who endeavour to perſuade weak minds, (and ſuch as are not able to Judge) that theſe Circumſtances of Religious Worſhip, now in uſe in the Church of *England*, are abſolutely unlawful, and that they ought neither to uſe them, nor to have any communion with

with thoſe who do uſe them; which is the true reaſon and foundation of their ſeparation. And that the treacherous dealers deal thus treacherouſly with us, is plain; for that the Ignorant and Vulgar always make this their Plea, for their forſaking our Communion, that their Conſciences will not give them leave to joyn with us in our unlawful Ceremonies, as, in deriſion, they call all the Service of the Church. And this they muſt needs have from their Teachers, who either ought not to have been Teachers, if they themſelves were not come to the knowledge of the Truth; or if they were, they ought to have taught them the Truth; and that theſe Modes, or Circumſtances of Religion, being in their own natures indifferent, were only matters of *Opinion*, and not of *Conſcience*, until ſuch time as they were, ſome way or other, lawfully determined. And to prove that this they ought to have done, and more than this, have taught their Hearers, That they ought to have ſubmitted to ſuch determinations, I will endeavour to make it plainly appear, by ſhewing how indifferent Circumſtances of Divine Worſhip become obligatory

to Conſcience, and ſo neceſſary to be performed.

Now all indifferent Circumſtances in Religious Worſhip become neceſſary, if in general they anſwer the great Deſign of God's glory, and the Happineſs of Mankind, both here and hereafter: it were enough therefore to demand, Which of all theſe indifferent things are contrary to theſe great Deſigns, and wherein? which I am ſure it is impoſſible for them to make appear. But for the ſatisfaction of ſome, who may retain their prejudices, for want of a better information, I will ſhew more fully and diſtinctly, how indifferent things become neceſſary; with ſome ſhort reflections upon ſuch of them, as in the Ceremonies and Service of the Church of *England* are moſt objected againſt.

Firſt therefore, an indifferent Circumſtance in Religious Worſhip becomes neceſſary, if in general it conduces to the advancement of Piety and Holineſs, becauſe whatſoever does ſo, is abſolutely neceſſary to be done; and it is every man's duty, to endeavour to promote goodneſs, by all lawful ways and means. Thus therefore, ſet and appointed times for

for Publick Worſhip and Service of God become neceſſary; ſuch are the *Lords Day*, and all other holy Faſts and Feſtivals, in which People aſſemble together to call upon and praiſe God, and to give him that devout Worſhip, and humble Adoration, which in duty they are bound to do; where ſin is reproved, the ignorant are inſtructed, the weak are confirmed and ſtrengthned, the Holy Sacraments, thoſe Pledges of God's Love, and Seals of our Inheritance with the Saints in Light, are celebrated; and all people are exhorted, directed, perſuaded, and encouraged to the performance of their reſpective duties, towards God and all men. And that ſuch ſet times are neceſſary, will appear, becauſe, were men left to their own liberty, when and where to perform theſe Duties of publick Worſhip, ſuch is the treachery and backwardneſs of mens natures, that if they were not determined by a neceſſity, they would generally neglect the Service of God, and find out perpetual excuſes and evaſions to delay the performance of it, to the great decay of Piety and Religion, and the great hazard of the ſalvation of their Souls. For this purpoſe alſo, pub-

lick Places of Assemblies, decent and convenient for those uses, become necessary: and by such Dedication, and solemn setting apart to the Service of God, they become his Houses, and cease to be common, or indifferent, by obtaining a Relative Holiness; such as did the ground about the burning Bush, the Temple and its Vessels, the Vestments and Chambers of the Priests; all which are called Holy: And therefore the Royal Psalmist does prophetically tell us, *Holiness becometh thy House for ever*; which must either be false, or else be understood of *Christian Temples*.

Exod. 3. 5. Ezek. 42. 13, 14. and 44. 19.

Psal. 93. ult.

Secondly, Indifferent things and Circumstances in Divine Worship, become necessary, if they promote *Peace*, *Unity* and *Charity*, according to those great and necessary Rules of the Gospel, *Live in peace, if it be possible; as much as in you lies, follow peace with all men. Finally, brethren, be of one mind. Above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. Keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Now remaineth Faith, Hope, and Charity, but the greatest of these is Charity.* Now that one set and

2 Cor. 13. 11. Heb. 12. 14. 2 Cor. 13. 2. Coloss. 3. 14. Ephes. 4. 3. 1 Cor. 13. 13.

and preſcribed form of Publick Worſhip, Adminiſtration of the Sacraments, and other Religious Duties, doth extremely promote all theſe, nothing can be more plain: for where men are left to their own liberty, one likes this way of performance, another likes and prefers another way; from hence immediately ariſes a breach of Unity, from thence men come to Diſputations and Controverſies, which is the beſt way. And whilſt each party is equally obſtinate in the defence of their own Opinion, many heats of paſſion happen, which vent themſelves in bitter words; from thence men come to variance, diviſion, and ſeparation; from thence to hatred; and then the door is ſet wide open to violence, force, confuſion, war, and all the innumerable miſchiefs, which are its dreadful conſequents, and conſtant companions. That theſe are ſad and experimented truths, I appeal to all ſober and conſiderative men: but leſt their Judgment ſhould not be ſatisfactory, let us hear the judgement of an Apoſtle, who was guided in what he writ by an infallible Spirit; *But if ye have bitter envyings and ſtrife in your hearts, glory not,* Jam. 3. 14.

and lye not againſt the truth. This wiſdom deſcendeth not from above, but is earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh: for where envying and ſtrife is, there is confuſion, and every evil work. But the wiſdom that is from above, is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, and eaſie to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits; without partiality, and without hypocriſie: and the fruit of righteouſneſs is ſown in peace of them that make peace. Nor is it poſſible to find out any way to make peace, and bring men to unity and charity, but by ſome determination of theſe indifferent things; which is not only my ſenſe and opinion, but that of all diſſenting Parties, who therefore propoſe the determination of them, by the eſtabliſhment of their way, as the only expedient to obtain theſe excellent ends.

Thirdly, Indifferent things become neceſſary, if they promote Decency and Order, becauſe ſo they are agreeable to St. *Paul's* general Rule, *Let all things be done decently and in order.* Thus, that all ſhould kneel at the Prayers where it is appointed, beſides, that it is a poſture of ſupplicating, humility, and devout adoration; That they ſhould ſtand up at the

1 Cor. 14. 40.

the rehearſal of the Articles of our Chriſtian Faith, and at the Hymns, Pſalms, and Praiſes, are all matters of great decency and order. Whereas that one ſhould ſit, another ſtand, a third lean, a fourth lye along at his eaſe, are no leſs indecent and irreverent, than diſorderly and confuſed. Thus, that Church-men ſhould wear diſtinct Habits, both when they celebrate the Divine Service, and at other times, ſuch as may ſhew gravity, ſobriety, purity, innocence, or diſtinction of degrees, are all decent and orderly, and ſo far therefore neceſſary.

Laſtly, Indifferent things become neceſſary, if they be ſignificantly expreſſive of our inward profeſſion. Thus the Croſs after Baptiſm, the Ring in Marriage, the Surplice and other Veſtments, Poſtures and Geſtures, having all their outward ſignifications of the inward profeſſion of our minds, are neceſſary for thoſe ends. I ſhould ſpeak more fully of theſe things, had not the Learned Mr. *Falkner* taken ſuch pains about them, and fitted them ſo narrowly, as not to leave any juſt pretence of a quarrel againſt them; to which incomparable Diſcourſe I therefore refer the Reader, for

for an ample ſatisfaction in all theſe particulars.

CHAP. XI.

Of the Way whereby indifferent things become obligatory to Conſcience, not only upon a Mans private Perſuaſion, from the forementioned Rules, but ſo as to oblige all perſons who live under Government, *viz. by the* Determinations, *and* Commands *of* Lawful Authority.

THus far I have ſhewn the chief, among many Conſiderations, whereby any indifferent thing may become neceſſary: ſo that if any perſon finds theſe or any other indifferent things in the Worſhip or Service of God, conduces to theſe Ends, he is obliged in *Conſcience* to the performance of them; but this layes only a private obligation, and the ſame that it does upon all other indifferent things and actions, which yet remain ſo, by being undetermined. But now in regard ſome of theſe things, though innocent and indifferent in their own Natures, may, to ſome Mens Opinions and Perſuaſions, appear very conducive to the before-mentioned Ends; others

others may appear more effectual to ſome other Perſons: leſt from divers Opinions, about theſe Circumſtantials of Religion, which are beſt, moſt decent, orderly, and edifying, there ſhould ariſe diviſion, diſtraction, and confuſion in the Service of God, as by miſerable experience we daily find there does; it is requiſite that we ſeek for ſome ſtronger obligation whereby thoſe things which are indifferent may become neceſſary to all; and this muſt be, by the determination, and commands of a *lawful Authority*, which has power to judge, which amongſt all indifferent circumſtances of Divine Worſhip, conduce moſt to Gods glory, and the good of Mankind, eſpecially thoſe under their charge and juriſdiction, by promoting and maintaining Peace, Unity, Concord, and Piety: and after ſuch judgment, to paſs a final determination, which ſhall lay the double obligation, both of a prudent and neceſſary *Law*, and alſo of *Conſcience* upon all who live under their Government, and expect the advantages of it, and therefore owe Obedience to it. For otherwiſe diſputes and differences muſt be endleſs, if

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Men will not refer themſelves to ſome Umpires and Arbitrators to decide them; which muſt (after Men have tyred themſelves to find out what theſe Arbitrators muſt be?) at the laſt be *lawful Authority*. Now that all Diſſenters are of the ſame judgment with us in this Point, and believe that a *lawful Authority* has this deciſive Power, it is moſt plain, from the frequent inſtances, and repeated importunities which they make to the Supreme Authority, to make Alterations in the preſent, or to eſtabliſh another manner or form of *Worſhip* according to their way: or however, if they cannot hope for ſuch Conceſſions, yet they will Petition, that *Authority* will not interpoſe it ſelf in theſe Religious Affairs, but leave them to their freedom in the manner of the exerciſe of their *Religion*; and this is, if I miſtake them not, that which they call *Liberty of Conſcience*: And they muſt either be the greateſt Diſſemblers and Hypocrites in Nature, by begging that from *Authority*, which they believe it has no real Power over; or elſe it plainly implies, That it is in the Power of *a lawful Authority* to determine that Liberty, in indifferent things, which

which concern the circumſtances of *Divine Worſhip*. This therefore being acknowledged, we have nothing to do but to prove, That the *Authority* which has determined theſe indifferent things, and by conſequence now made them neceſſary to be done, and matter of *Conſcience*, had a juſt Right and Power, as well as wiſe and prudent Reaſons and Conſiderations ſo to do, as being *a lawful Authority*.

We muſt therefore conſider and examine what is requiſite to make an *Authority ſo lawful*, as that it may of Right challenge ſuch a deciſive and determinative Power, as that all Perſons who live under it, ſhall be obliged in Point of *Conſcience*, to ſubmit to its definitive Sentence, and take it for a *finalis Concordia*, in all indifferent things; and to which no Man can be diſobedient, without a manifeſt and wilful ſin againſt *Conſcience*, in the breach of thoſe known commands, *Obey them that have the Rule over you. And let every Soul be ſubject to the higher Powers.* Rom. 13.1.

Firſt therefore, that *Authority* which is of *Gods appointment*, is, without controverſie, *a lawful Authority*, as pleading

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a Divine Right from him by whom Kings reign. Such was the Authority of *Moſes*, *Aaron*, *Samuel*, and the Judges; and even of *Saul*, a wicked and tyrannous Prince, of whom therefore *David* ſaid to *Abiſhai*, *Deſtroy him not, for who can lift up his hand againſt the Lords Anointed, and be guiltleſs?* And it was well for him that he fell into the hands of a Man who was after Gods own heart. We have ſeen ſome, whom a leſſer intereſt than *Davids* in his death, would have tempted to ſerve him as *Epaminondas* did his ſleeping Centinel; had they found him ſleeping, they would have been of *Abiſhai*'s judgment, and have left him ſleeping his laſt.

1 Sam. 26. 9.

But to proceed, ſecondly, That *Authority is lawful, which is warranted by long Succeſſion: Preſcription* is accounted a good and ſafe Plea and Title, for all other Men for their Eſtates and Poſſeſſions; certainly much more for the Crowns of Sovereign Princes: for hereby their Title paſſes into Inheritance, which is a Right which no Man can violate or invade, without being guilty of the breach of that poſitive and known Command, *Thou ſhalt not covet.*

Laſtly,

Laſtly, *That Authority is lawful, which by Choice, and common Conſent,* for their mutual benefit and advantage, Men agree to, and by lawful ways ſtipulate, and oblige themſelves, one or more to govern, and rule, and the reſt to obey: for this is founded upon the Law of Nature and Nations, which teaches all People, that Faith in ſolemn, deliberate, and lawful Contracts, ſuch as this is, is moſt ſacredly to be kept inviolated; otherwiſe there could not be any Society, Government, Law or Living in the World. And the Holy Writings confirm the ſame, when they tell us, our ſolemn Compacts and Contracts are to be obſerved, though to our loſs and detriment, or elſe we muſt never expect to aſcend the holy and heavenly hill; except we be ſuch as though we ſwear, that is, make a ſolemn lawful Contract, though to our own prejudice in the event, and yet nevertheleſs change not, but ſtand firm to our promiſe and obligation. Pſal. 15. 4.

Now all theſe ſeveral ways of any Authorities becoming lawful; ſo as to have a juſt Power and Dominion in making Laws for the determination of

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indifferent things, which, amongst many, are most conducive to Gods glory, and the Publick advantage of those under their Dominion, both in Civil and Religious Affairs, are most eminently to be found in the present Authority of these Nations.

First, there is *Divine Appointment* and *Ordination*, whether we respect *Monarchy* or *Episcopacy*? And if we can prove there were Kings and Bishops in the World, when St. *Paul* writ his Epistles, I think, notwithstanding what many have said against it, the Case will be clear; *For*, saith he, *there is no Power but of God*; that is, lawful Powers, such as the then *Roman* Emperors, who by succession became lawful; for we cannot imagine he meant to countenance unlawful and usurping Powers: and therefore he adds, *the Powers that be*, that is, the present *Roman* Emperors, and their subordinate Magistrates and Ministers, *are ordained of God: whosoever therefore resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of God; and they that resist, shall receive damnation.* Now that there were Kings when he writ, is plain from that place, where he commands, *That first of all Sup-*

Rom. 13. 1.

1 Tim. 2. 1.

Supplications, Prayers, Interceſſions, and giving of Thanks, be made for all Men, for Kings, and all that are in Authority. If St. *Paul*'s Writings were a Rule for thoſe Ages, they are likewiſe a Rule for us, and for all People to the Worlds end, and then the Argument will hold good, If Kings in St. *Paul*'s time had a Divine Right to their Crowns, they have ſo ſtill, or elſe what was Scripture then, is not ſo now; the danger of which conſequence is ſo apparent, that I cannot imagine there will be found any that will venture to own it.

The great queſtion will be, Whether there were *Biſhops* then? For if there were, they likewiſe, by the *Apoſtles* Rule, *were ordained of God*, or elſe they had no Power. That there were *Biſhops*, it is plain, for we have the Name very frequent in *Scripture*; Chriſt himſelf, from whom the reſt ſo often mentioned derived their Office and Authority, as before we took notice, being called *the great Biſhop*, as well as *Paſtor of our Souls.*

And that theſe *Biſhops* had a Power and Authority in the Church, and exerciſed the ſame office in the Government

of the Church as the preſent *Biſhops* do, is no leſs evident; and that in this very Point of determining indifferent things *in Divine Worſhip*. Thus *St Paul* takes upon him to order the Church of the *Corinthians*, about the Celebration of
1 Cor. 11. 34. the *Lords Supper*; and after that done, tells them, *If there were any other thing in difference or diſorder, the reſt will I ſet in order when I come.* And that he did this by virtue of his Office, and by
Ver. 23. a Power derived from Chriſt, the firſt and great *Biſhop*, he tells them, *That he received of the Lord, that which he delivered unto them:* And wherever he is poſitive in giving any Rules or Directions of Government, Decency, or Order, we may aſſure our ſelves he does it by virtue of this Power of his Office; for otherwiſe he would tell us, it is but his private Judgment or Perſuaſion, which he would not impoſe upon Chriſtians, though he had a fair pretence ſo to do, as appears by that place concern-
2 Cor. 7. 25. ing *Virginity* and *Marriage: Now concerning Virgins, I have no Commandment of the Lord; yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy to be faithful.* But if any Perſon ſhall pretend he did

did this by virtue of his *Apoſtolical Office*, which was an immediate Commiſſion from the mouth of Chriſt at his miraculous Converſion; to convince them that a *Biſhop*, who was no *Apoſtle*, had the ſame Power, and exerciſed the ſame Office, there is nothing more plain, than that place in his *Epiſtle* to *Titus*: *For this purpoſe left I thee in* Crete, *that thou ſhouldeſt ſet in order the things that are wanting, and ordain Elders in every City*; in which place I think our *Engliſh Tranſlation* has not rightly expreſſed the meaning of the *Original Greek*. And this ſeems to be the proper ſenſe of the words; that *St. Paul* having been himſelf in *Crete*, and ſet many things in order, he left *Titus* there, to place ſuch Prieſts as he before had Ordained, in the ſeveral Cities of that Iſland; and put them into the Power and Office of *Biſhops*, which he had not done, as may appear by the following deſcription of a *Biſhop*, what manner of Man he ought to be; and for the word Πρεσβύτεροι, which is Tranſlated *Elders*, it ſignifies in all Antiquity, (the beſt Expoſitor of the Idiom of words) *Prieſts* who were therefore ſo called, becauſe always cho-

Tit. 1. 5.

The word Καταστήσῃς tranſlated *Ordain*, ſignifies to conſtitute and appoint a perſon over a certain place and employment.

out of the ancienteſt Converts to *Chriſtianity*, and the longeſt ſtanders in *Religion*; and the Rule held good concerning *Prieſts* as well as *Biſhops*; that in their Elections they ſhould not chooſe a Novice; that is, one lately converted, leſt wanting the ballaſt of age, experience and diſcretion; the height of ſo honorable an office ſhould puff up ſuch an one with pride, and ſo he fall into the condemnation of the Devil. And that *Titus*, who was the firſt or chief *Biſhop* in *Crete*, as well in order of place as time, and ſo had many inferior *Biſhops* under him, we have the Poſtſcript, or rather Superſcription of the Epiſtle, which for any thing can be proved to the contrary, may be as ancient as the Epiſtle; beſides, that he was the firſt *Biſhop* in order of time, we have the teſtimony of all Antiquity, who never once doubted the truth of it.

1 Tim. 3. 6.

So that *Monarchy*, and *Epiſcopacy*, being then Powers in the World; and the Powers that then were, being *ordained of God:* it follows plainly, that they have a juſt and warrantable, if not an undeniable Plea to a Divine Right.

Secondly, There is long ſucceſſion of both:

both: of this very Race of Kings for above 603 years: and long may their Imperial Crown and Royal Dignity flouriſh and increaſe; even ſo long as *the Sun and the Moon endure:* And for the ſucceſſion of *Biſhops*, it is of much an ancienter date; and though the time be not certain, yet that the *Britains* did very early receive *the Chriſtian Faith*, and with it *Epiſcopal Government*, is a thing not to be doubted, if we will give any credit to the *ancient Hiſtorians*, ſome of which would perſuade us, that *Britain* was *Chriſtian* as ſoon, or even before *Rome* it ſelf.

Laſtly, there is *Choice*, and a freedom of Election in the *Houſe of Commons*, which repreſents the groſs Body of the *Nation*; and is one part of the *Authority* thereof: as for the Intereſt which the reſt of the moſt *Honourable Peerage* have in the management of Publick Affairs, it being one of the dear bought Fundamentals of the *Magna Charta*, it was a thing never diſputed till the late days of *Confuſion*, when the very foundations were violently torn up by the roots, with the Tempeſt, or rather Hurricane of Religious Rebellion; and I

hope it will never come to a second Vote, that the House of Peers is useless to this Nation, or a Government without them.

So that here is whatsoever is requisite to make any Authority lawful, so as to have a just Right and Dominion over all those who live under it, for the final determination and conclusion of all indifferent things, both in Religious and Civil Affairs.

That this may appear plain to every apprehension, we will give an instance in a point controverted amongst us. Prayer is an immediate act of Divine Worship, and of it self absolutely necessary to be performed to God, who is *the God of all flesh, and therefore unto him shall all flesh come*; because he *heareth prayers*, and his *house is the house of prayer for all Nations*. But to pray in a set and prescribed form of words, or to pray as a mans abilities give him leave, or as it is called, by *Ex tempore prayer*, according as the present occasion may seem to require, are in their own natures indifferent: and I doubt not, but if either be done with all due circumstances, they may be acceptable to God.

Psal. 65. 2.

Matth. 21. 13.

God. But now one man is perſuaded, that ſet. forms in the publick ſervice of God are the beſt, another thinks, *Ex tempore prayer* the beſt way. So long as this is undetermined by a Lawful Authority, every man is obliged to follow his private Opinion, becauſe Conſcience obliges him to follow that determination of his judgment in indifferent things, which he is fully perſuaded is the beſt, and conduces moſt effectually to God's glory, and the promoting of Piety. But becauſe diverſity of Opinion, Perſuaſion, and Practiſe in this Duty, is apt to breed Diviſion and Diſſention; and to prejudice, if not ruine that Unity, Peace, Charity, and Order, which ought to be preſerved inviolate amongſt all men, eſpecially Chriſtians; therefore that Authority, which has a juſt power over us, as being of God's appointment, of long ſucceſſion, and of our own choice; to prevent theſe diſorders, and the confuſion and dangers which may enſue upon diviſions of Mind, and difference of Practice, interpoſeth it ſelf: and conſidering, that our great Lord and Saviour, who tells us, he

was to be our Example, prescribed a set Form of Prayer, and positively commanded his Disciples so to pray, *When ye pray, say, Our Father*, &c. That both the Antient and Modern Churches did, and do use and approve set Forms of Prayer in Publick Worship, that hereby, rash and inconsiderate men shall not have liberty to utter any thing before God; nor to *use vain repetitions, as the Heathen did*; nor (which is much worse than they were guilty of in their much speaking, for which they thought to be heard) non-sence, indecent or irreverend expressions: that men of greater abilities should not be puft up, and those who have not that freedom and fluency of utterance, should not be despised, in regard for their Piety, soundness of Judgment, integrity of Life, or ability to Govern, they may be of as great use in the Church as others. That hereby the ignorant and unlearned shall be better able to joyn with him that Ministreth, knowing what he is to say, than if they did not; and with a safe Conscience may say *Amen*, which I am sure to every *Extempore* Prayer they cannot; and that all men may, by Uniformity, be brought

Luk. 11. 2.

Mat. 6. 7.

brought to Unity, that ſo neceſſary Bond of perfection, both as to Religion and Civil Policy. For theſe, and many other neceſſary and prudent conſiderations, this Lawful Authority judges it moſt conducive to God's Glory, moſt agreeable to his Will, and moſt effectual to procure the happineſs of thoſe under their Authority, both here and hereafter, to preſcribe and command a ſet Form of Prayer, in the Publick Worſhip of Almighty God.

And now that which before was indifferent, becomes neceſſary in point of Conſcience: becauſe the *Scripture* is clear in the caſe, that *Lawful Authority* is to be obey'd in whatſoever it commands, that is not ſimply and abſolutely unlawful, and that for Conſcience ſake; and the obligation which before I might have from my private *Opinion* or *Perſuaſion*, ought, in Modeſty, as well as Duty and Charity, to give way to the Determinations of my Lawful *Superiors*, in all indifferent things.

And therefore they who, now it is determined, either deſpiſe it, or refuſe to uſe it, or to joyn with thoſe who do uſe it, ſin againſt Conſcience, becauſe againſt many

many plain and positive commands of *Scripture* before mentioned, and for which St. *Paul* seems extremely solicitous, as well knowing Pride and Disobedience to be the most natural sins: and therefore commands, that men be
Tit. 3. 1. *put in mind* (as being apt to forget their Duty) *that they be subject to Principalities and Powers, to obey Magistrates.*

The very same may be said of any of the rest of those things which are enjoyned by the present Authority of this Nation, which, by being commanded, from indifferent become necessary, and with such a dreadful necessity, that whosoever resisteth a Lawful Power, if St. *Paul* be to be credited, *shall receive to themselves damnation.*

And let them seriously take notice of it, how light a matter soever it may be made, there is no man who does thus wilfully resist and disobey Authority, that can hope for *Salvation.* As for those who do it in ignorance, I will not determine how indulgent God may be to them. But they must know, that though God may have winked at their former ignorance, yet now he commands them, and all men, every where to

to repent. And they will be inexcuſable, if they be ignorant, becauſe they will be ſo. It is their duty therefore, to look for a better Information of their minds; and laying aſide all partiality and prejudice, to ſubmit to the truth, how contrary ſoever it may be to their *Opinions*, which, by long continuance in, are become very ſtrong and habitual to them: for without Repentance and Reformation, there can be no Pardon.

I cannot, without amazement, ſee ſome men, who appear in other things moſt nicely Conſcientious, yet make ſo ſlight a matter of this; nay, many of them, the greateſt and onely differencing part of their Religion, themſelves to diſobey Lawful Authority, and by their Example and Practiſe, if not Doctrine, at leaſt in private, to teach others to do the ſame. I wiſh they would conſider, what dangerous influences ſuch Practiſes have had, and ſtill have upon their Bodies, Souls, Reputation, and Eſtates, and indeed upon every thing that ought to be dear and tender to them. Beſides, the moſt fatal, miſchievous, and dangerous conſequences

quences they have had, and, if purſued, will have ſtill upon the ſafety and well-being of the Community in which they live: which, by their diſobedience to Laws, the only Fences of Religion, Life, Right, and Property, thoſe *Deliciæ Humani generis*, the Darlings of all Mankind, they do as much as in them lies to ruine and deſtroy.

CHAP. XII.

Some Conſiderations, ſhewing the unreaſonableneſs and impracticableneſs of the deſires of thoſe perſons, who, under pretence of Conſcience, are for erecting of new ways of Church-government, or for Toleration or Liberty of Conſcience.

TO ſhew the great unreaſonableneſs and impracticableneſs of the deſires of all Diſſenters, there need no more to be ſaid, than to make them this Propoſal, which I dare ſay may moſt ſafely be done, That ſo ſoon as they ſhall unanimouſly have agreed in all particulars, and ſo as to reconcile all Intereſts, and ſatisfie all Parties, what way of Government they would have eſtabliſhed, they

they ſhall receive a gratification of their deſires; provided in the mean time they ſubmit, as becomes good Subjects and Chriſtians, to the preſent. And if they ſhall, in anſwer to the offer, ſay, That it is impoſſible to find out ſuch a way of Government as ſhall pleaſe all Men, Intereſts, and Parties; would it not be the higheſt frenzie imaginable, by removing the preſent Government, of the goodneſs of which we have had ſo long experience, to introduce any other, which can gratifie but one, and, it may be, an inconſiderable Party; and, in recompence, diſoblige all the reſt; and, for any thing we know, even thoſe who ſo eagerly deſire it, as ſoon as any others, ſince having never yet made a full tryal of it, though it may look bravely, like *Saul's* Armour upon *David*, it may not prove ſo eaſie or convenient, but, with him, they may be willing to put it off again, and ſtick to the old and plain Epiſcopal Armour of the Shepherds Staff and Sling. 1 Sam. 17. 39.

Beſides, this way of Government in the Church, is ſo curiouſly twiſted and interwoven with the Politick Government in the State, that it is impoſſible to pick out this part, without ſpoiling the

the Beauty, and unravelling the whole Web and Frame of the Government; it is one of the main Pillars, upon which this weighty and well-built Fabrick ſtands; and cannot be taken away, but it muſt endanger the fall and ruine of the whole Building: and they muſt be as full of revenge, and as blind as *Sampſon*, who would, by pulling down this Pillar, bring the Houſe about their own heads; ſince it is odds, but, with him, they muſt periſh in the common ruine; and I hope, what ever will they may have, their Hair will never be ſuffered to grow ſo long again, as to recover their *Sampſon*'s ſtrength, ſo as to be able to effect it. It was this conſideration which made as wiſe and learned a Prince as ever ſwayed the *Britiſh* Sceptre, ſo frequently tell the Diſſenters of his Age, *No Biſhop, no King:* which by the moſt deplorable experience, was verified in his Succeſſor. Nor did the fatal conſequence end there; but after, *No Biſhop, no King*, came marching up a dreadful Army of Negatives, *No Houſe of Peers; No free, no full Houſe of Commons; No Law, no Juſtice*, unleſs it were the *High Court* ſo called; *No liberty, no property,*

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no ſafety, no ſecurity, and, at laſt, *nothing but confuſion*; all admirable effects of changing that Government, which before was moſt ſafe and eaſie, into that which was moſt Arbitrary, Tyrannical, and inſupportable. If experience be not ſufficiently convincing in this particular, I know not what new School of Fools, or rather Mad-men, we muſt ſeek for, to perſuade us to the belief of theſe Truths.

But further, I wiſh that all Diſſenters would conſider with themſelves, whither this will lead them, and what muſt be the end of it. For a Toleration of Diſobedience to the Commands of a Lawful Authority, is a Principle deſtructive of all Government, of all Religion, and even of that which theſe men would endeavonr to eſtabliſh: for we will ſuppoſe what they deſire, that that way of Government, which they are ſo fond of, were, by the Authority, in favour of them, eſtabliſhed and ſetled as firmly and ſtrongly, as the preſent Church-Government is; it is impoſſible that it ſhould pleaſe all people, nay, it is moſt certain, it would diſ-

pleaſe

pleaſe all other parties, whoſe way was either abrogated to make room for the new one, or theirs which was rejected, and in probability therefore, the greateſt part of the Nation: and there would not want thoſe, who would be able to raiſe and manage more forcible Objections and Arguments againſt their way, than any they can bring againſt what is now in being. Now they muſt be unreaſonable in the higheſt meaſure, if they would not grant the ſame liberty to others, who diſſent from them and their way, which now they deſire for themſelves; ſince it is not to be doubted, but they would have the ſame (and poſſibly a juſter) plea of Conſcience for themſelves, which theſe now make, and therefore ought to have Indulgence and Toleration: and I would gladly know whether that can be called a Government, or only an Image of it, and an empty name, where men have liberty to obey it, if they pleaſe, or may be diſobedient to it by its own conſent, if they ſo pleaſe?

But further, what reaſon can they have to expect any other, having ſhewn them the way to change, but that the Au-

Authority ſhould ſtill make tryal of new Governments, and not confine all their kindneſs to them, but ſtill gratifie and oblige, firſt, one Party, and then another, according as the perſons who compoſe that Authority, may be favourably inclined to one perſuaſion or another? I hope they would not complain of Injuſtice in the *Lex Talionis*, or grumble to reſign that Power, which, for their ſakes, others before them were obliged to do. And ſhould the Wheel turn thus round, they muſt with their way expect to be laid in the duſt. And what ſtrange Alterations, Revolutions, Settlements, and Unſettlements muſt there be? What face of Government, or rather what Confuſion muſt of neceſſity follow the Practiſe of this Principle?

And that theſe are the natural effects of Diſobedience to Lawful Government, let us but turn our eyes a little backward, and we ſhall plainly ſee: And theſe Diſſenters, however they ſeem to have forgot it, may remember they have ſeen the days, when the Presbyterian was in favour, and full of hopes, having troden upon the neck of diſmounted Epiſcopa-

cy, to advance into the Chariot of Government: but the crafty Independent coming ſlily behind him, whipt up his heels, and laid him in the dirt; and was juſt going himſelf to take poſſeſſion of the vacant ſeat, when the ſurly *Anabaptiſt*, *Quaker*, *Leveller*, and ſeveral others, ruſhing in all at once upon him, told him, with the Hand all the while upon the Hilts, that they had as juſt a right as he, and that they would not part with it, without a fair Trial of skill, who had the longeſt Sword? And there was nothing gave the late *Uſurper* more trouble, than the importunities of theſe ſeveral Intereſts, which he kept from falling foul one upon another, by tollerating all for the preſent, and cajolling the Heads of the Parties with Proteſtations and Aſſurances, that in his heart he was of their perſuaſion, and, in time, would declare himſelf to be ſo: though for the preſent, in regard of the Malignant Party, it did not ſtand with his Intereſt, nor theirs, ſo to do, till they were more fully aſſured againſt the common Enemy: though at laſt they all found him to be

meer

meer *Proteus*, or *Polypus* in Religion, and that he could change himſelf into the ſhape and colour of that Party which was neareſt to him.

Laſtly, Let them conſider, That this Principle muſt give increaſe, growth, and encouragement to all Sects and Hereſies; ſince all pretend Conſcience, and plead for Toleration. And if this Liberty of Conſcience be granted them, there muſt of neceſſity follow infinite and unavoidable Diviſions, Separation upon Separation, Confuſion, and at laſt Atheiſm; ſince amongſt ſo many pretenders to the true Religion, all will at laſt come to be ſuſpected to be falſe.

Theſe are certainly the neceſſary effects, and inevitable conſequences, of unſetling the preſent Government in the Church, either by changing it for a new one, or permitting Toleration, or what men call, *Liberty of Conſcience*: And we muſt either believe, that theſe Diſſenters do not foreſee, or underſtand the danger of this Precipice, to which they make ſuch haſte; or if they do, that they are the moſt malicious of Mankind, ſince they would ſacri-

fice all *Law*, *Government*, *Liberty*, *Property*, and *Religion*, to their own private *Opinions* and *Perſuaſion*.

CHAP. XIII.

A vindication of what is before laid down as a fundamental Principle in this Diſcourſe: viz. *That God Almighty made Mankind for an excellent End*; *that is*, *his Glory*; *and in order thereunto*, *by obedience to his Commands*, *their own happineſs both here in this Life*, *and hereafter in the Life of Immortality*.

THus far I have endeavoured to follow the Clew of Truth and Reaſon; which if others would likewiſe do, I doubt not, but it would bring them out of thoſe Mazes and Labyrinths of doubts, which perplex their minds, and make their Lives ſo uneaſie both to themſelves and others, by making many things matters and ſcruples of Conſcience, when in truth they were not ſuch. And not only ſo, but likewiſe it would conduce much to the calming of thoſe ſtorms and tempeſts, which are gathering from ſo many ſeveral Quarters, and ſeem

ſeem to threaten both Church and State, if not with Shipwrack, yet with moſt violent agitations and commotions.

But before I conclude, there is one thing which I have laid down as a fundamental Principle in this Diſcourſe, and upon which a great part of this weighty building of Conſcience does depend, as upon a main Pillar; which I think it will be neceſſary to make clear and evident. And that is, That the great *Creator*, out of the Excellency of his Nature, made the World, and particularly Mankind, for a moſt excellent End; *viz.* his own Glory, and, in order thereunto, the happineſs of Mankind here in this Life, as a preparative to Eternal happineſs hereafter.

That this is a moſt certain and undeniable Truth, (however ſome narrow-ſpirited men, who would engroſs all the bounty of Heaven to themſelves, may think otherwiſe, by taking ſuch low meaſures of the Divine Goodneſs and Beneficence, as may be proportionable to the Stature of their own underſtandings, though far ſhort of Infinite, which is the only true meaſure of the Deity) I doubt

not but to make it most evidently plain and apparent, to all those who do not wilfully close their eyes against the brightest beams of Truth, Reason, and Scripture.

First therefore, we must consider the Incomparable Excellency of this Infinite Being, who is the Author of all things; for he himself tells us, that *his mercy reacheth unto the Clouds, and his goodness far above these visible Heavens*; and that it *is over all his works*. And lest we should be mistaken, by judging him according to our selves, he gives us to know, that *his thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways like our ways*; low, narrow, and short: *But as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways and thoughts high above our ways*. A comparison large and wide enough, to shew us the vast disproportion betwixt Finite and Infinite Goodness. Now there can be nothing more suitable and agreeable to the Goodness, Bounty, Wisdom, Power, and Justice of his Essence, which is infinite, than a Design, that all his Creatures should be happy according to their several capacities, which he, who made

Psal. 57. 10.

Isa. 55. 7, 8, 9.

nothing

nothing in vain, created them with. And on the contrary, to ſuppoſe he made any thing with a capacity of enjoying any degree of Happineſs, as its ultimate End, and chief Good; and yet with an intention and deſign, not onely of not attaining it, but of being for ever miſerable, is ſo far from magnifying his Goodneſs or Juſtice, that it would argue him of ſuch a cruel nature, as were the higheſt derogation, and moſt proper blaſphemy, to believe it of him. And that his Juſtice will be glorified in the puniſhment and miſery of ſome of his Creatures, even of the Nobleſt Rank, he aſſures us with the higheſt proteſtation imaginable, is far from being an effect of his Will, and is perfectly occaſioned by their own choice, and wilful folly. *As I live, ſaith the Lord*; that is, as ſurely as I am, *I have no pleaſure in the death of a ſinner, but had rather that he ſhould turn and live. Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?* And if he hath no pleaſure in his death, a ſmaller puniſhment, undoubtedly not in his Eternal Damnation, the greateſt of all miſeries. Ezek. 33. 11.

But ſecondly, let us conſider, That the ſcope of all Religion, and the Commands of God in Scripture, all aim directly at this White; *viz.* the happineſs of all Mankind, even here in this Life, in order to an Eternal Happineſs hereafter, in the Life of Immortality and Glory: and therefore does ſo frequently promiſe to the Obedient all thoſe things which may compoſe the happineſs even of this Life; the *Bona, Corporis, Animi & Fortunæ*, all the good things of Body, and Mind, and Eſtate; according to
1 Tim.6.6. 1 Tim.4.8. that ſaying of the Apoſtle, *Godlineſs with contentment* (which it only can give) *is great gain, having the promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.* Now the means which God commands us to uſe, and the means which he directs, are the moſt certain Rule for us to make a Judgment, what is the End at which he would have us arrive. For God is true, and cannot lie, though all men may be liars, and therefore we are bound to believe him; and that he cannot tell us one thing, when he means another directly contrary to it: as ſome men, who call themſelves Divines, have both

both by Word and Writing publickly avowed, and publiſh'd to the World.

If we look upon the Commands of the Law, ſuch as were not only particular to the *Jewiſh* Nation in their Typical Service, but common to all the children of *Abraham* by Faith; we ſhall find, that they all aim at this: And the two Tables, written with the Divine Characters, by the immediate Finger of God, direct, firſt, his Worſhip; ſecondly, man's happineſs, by obedience to Superiours, in the firſt Commandment with promiſe; by Juſtice, Chaſtity, Temperance, Truth, and Honeſty, and all other Virtues, which conduce to our happineſs here in this Life: and by making us partakers of the Divine Nature, fitting and preparing us for the enjoyment of Heaven and Happineſs hereafter.

And if we examine either the Doctrine or practiſe of all holy Men, ſo far as their Practiſe is recorded for our example, we ſhall find, that they have all a tendency to theſe very Ends.

If we come to look into that *Royal Law of Liberty*, the Goſpel, we ſhall find,

find, that all its Commands and Directions, lead us to our own happineſs: witneſs that Golden, and, even by Heathens, much celebrated Rule, of our
Mat. 7. 12. bleſſed Jeſus, *To do to all men, as we would that they ſhould do unto us.* A Rule to make all the World happy, and a Rule which, I am ſure, no Diſſenter dare abide by, and which ſurpaſſeth all that ever went before it, and is the higheſt exaltation of Humane Nature, even to ſuch a degree, as brings it to a near affinity and reſemblance of the bleſſed
Mat. 5. 44, *ad finem.* Divinity, who makes his *Sun to ſhine upon the juſt and unjuſt.* To *love our enemies.* To *bleſs thoſe that curſe us*, to *do good to them that hate us*, and to *pray for them that deſpitefully uſe us and perſecute us.*

And the Diſciples ſpake the ſame Language of their great Lord and Maſter, who left his Peace, and command of Unity, to *love one another*, as a Legacy among them; and enforces it upon them with the moſt powerful
Joh. 14. 15. perſuaſive, *If ye love me, keep my commandments*; telling them, this love and unity ſhould be the badge and diſtincti-

diſtinction of their profeſſion, *By this ſhall all men know that you are my Diſciples, if ye love one another.* Thus therefore they command Piety and Unity, Peace and Charity, Love unfeigned, Obedience to Magiſtrates and Miniſters; that Duty, Honour, and Reſpect, which is due to any, to be given unto them: to live Juſtly, Soberly, Religiouſly in this preſent World; in all Honeſty, Quietneſs, Humility, Chaſtity, Temperance, and all others Virtues and Goodneſs, one toward another, and as we have opportunity to do good unto all. Let any man judge, if theſe Rules were exactly followed, if the Golden Age would not return, and all men be as happy as heart can wiſh. The Effects which they would produce, plainly demonſtrate the Ends for which they were deſigned. Joh. 13. 35.

Beſides, all agree to this, That the great deſign of the Creation was the glory of the Creator; now the ſame thing which glorifies the Creator, does alſo make the Creature happy; and that is, Obedience to his Will, Laws, and Commands. And that the Will of God

God is to be glorified by the Obedience, and not Punishment of his Creatures, as his first design in their Creation has already, from his own protestation, been shewn. And the Apostle is as plain as positive in this point, That *God would have all men to be saved*, by *coming to the knowledge of the truth.* And for this purpose, that *Christ gave himself a ransome for all.*

1 Tim. 3. 3, 4. v. 6.

And whosoever does peruse the Holy Gospel, shall be forced to acknowledge, that the whole design of it is, That all men, by the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ, might come to yield obedience to his holy Laws and Directions; and that by following them, they *might escape the pollutions and corruptions that are in the World through lust*; and be made *partakers of the Divine Nature*, by living justly, righteously, and Godlike, blameless and harmless, as the Sons of God here in this World: that so through the all-sufficient merits and satisfaction of the only Son of God, they may, as the end of their Faith, Hope, Charity, and Constancy, be made partakers of that glorious Life and Immortality, which

2 Pet. 1. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

which he has purchaſed for them with his moſt precious Blood.

So that as nothing can be more ſutable to the excellency of the Divine Being, than a deſign in their Creation, that they ſhould all be happy according to their ſeveral Capacities; ſo nothing is more clear, from the unanimous conſent and deſign of the Holy Scriptures, which contain the Will of God, than that this was the great and ultimate End of the *Omnipotent Creator*, in the framing the World, and particularly in the Creation of Mankind, to be happy both here and hereafter in a future ſtate.

CHAP. XIV.

Some neceſſary Corollaries from the former Diſcourſe; with the Concluſion, to all men to endeavour after Peace and Unity.

FRom what has before been ſaid, we may draw theſe neceſſary and practical Conſequences and Concluſions.

First, That every man is obliged to yield obedience to Conſcience, upon pain of Eternal Damnation: becauſe every man

man is obliged, under that penalty, to walk according to the Scripture Rule, which is that by which Conſcience judges every man, whether he does right or wrong: according to what St. *John* tells us, *If our heart*, that is, our Conſcience, *condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things*, and moſt certainly will condemn us in that great and fearful Judgment-day. And whoſoever violates a known command of Scripture, however he may colour it over with the fair pretence of Religion, yet, as St. *Paul* ſaith, *Though the truth of God ſhould abound, through my lie, unto his glory, yet I ſhall be alſo judged as a ſinner.* And ſo ſhall all thoſe, who with pretence of advancing God's glory and the truth, act contrary to the Rule of Truth and Righteouſneſs. But if at the laſt it ſhall be found, that they have not been managed by Conſcience, but Opinion and Perſuaſion, what can they expect, but the greateſt ſeverities, and inſufferable torments and agonies of Conſcience, *the worm that never dies?* which ſhould put all men upon a ſtrict

1 Joh. 3. 5.

Rom. 3. 7.

exami-

examination of themſelves, eſpecially thoſe who pretend to be ſo much managed by Conſcience; whether it be a true and good Conſcience, or onely theſe Deceivers and Uſurpers, *Opinion* and *Perſuaſion*.

Secondly, it follows, That Indifferent things in Religious Worſhip, laying no further Obligation upon mens Conſciences, than as they conduce to God's glory, and the happineſs of the Univerſe; and a Lawful Authority having a Power to put a final determination upon every man's private Judgment and Opinion, by declaring which of all theſe indifferent things they judge moſt conducive to God's glory, and the happineſs of all thoſe under their Juriſdiction, by promoting and preſerving Peace, Unity, and Charity. Therefore that all perſons who live under their Authority, are bound in Conſcience to ſubmit to thoſe Determinations: and from thence-forward to eſteem that, which before was in its own nature indifferent, to become neceſſary: becauſe hereby many known Duties, and particularly that of Obedience

dience to Magiſtrates (without which, there can be no happineſs on Earth) are performed, to the ſatisfaction of an abſolute and indiſpenſible Obligation of Conſcience.

Laſtly, it follows, That all men are bound in Conſcience to promote and endeavour the well-being of the Lawful Government under which they live; and as much as in them lies, the happineſs of all Mankind even here in this life. Nor can they follow the Dictates of true Religion or Conſcience, whatever they may pretend or imagine, who for their private Opinions, make Parties, break Laws, deſpiſe Governments, give diſturbances to the Peace and Security of their Native Countrey at home, and by promoting Faction, Diſſention, and Diviſion, give encouragement to our Enemies abroad. And by too juſt fears, from what has been, of what may be again, by the ſame ways and artifices, to make mens minds uneaſie, and their lives unhappy. And ſhould their Deſigns ſucceed a ſecond time, to involve ſo many millions in the calamities of War, Confuſion, Ruine, and Deſolation.

Theſe

Theſe have been, and are the proper effects of Diſobedience to Laws and Lawful Authority: and let all Diſſenters look well to it, for they will find, here is no Conſcience, no Religion to be found in ſuch ways and ends, to which their Separation and Diviſion do moſt infallibly lead them.

I wiſh I could conclude this Diſcourſe with the moſt perſuaſive Arguments, and irreſiſtable Reaſon. That all Chriſtian People, and eſpecially thoſe Diſſenters of theſe Nations, would ſeriouſly conſider with themſelves, whither theſe Diſcords and Differences about Religious affairs will in the end lead them; and in time turn back again, before they come to the diſmal brink of thoſe Precipices, Miſery here, and Damnation hereafter; which when by a too late Repentance they would avoid, they will not be able.

I wiſh they would no longer abuſe that glorious name of *Conſcience*, to countenance thoſe Irreligious practiſes, of Diſobedience, Uncharitableneſs, Diſſention and Separation.

Let them conſider, what it is in this

World that is moſt deſirable; and whether they do not act point blank contrary to their own Intereſt and Happineſs, both here and hereafter; and directly againſt the publick Good of the Community of which they are Members; and whether they may not juſtly fear, that by theſe dangerous and unlawful practices, they ſhould ſo far exaſperate Authority, as to exerciſe its utmoſt rigors and ſeverities upon them, as being out of all hopes to reclaim them by gentle means, and juſtly jealous of their malicious, ſecret, and ill deſigns, in reality againſt the State, though the pretence be only againſt the preſent Church and its Government.

Let them conſider, that if they deſire to have peace within their private Walls, and plenteouſneſs within their ſtately Palaces; if they deſire to enjoy quiet of mind at home, tranquillity, peace, and unity one amongſt another; that *Juſtice ſhould run down as a River, and Righteouſneſs as a mighty Stream.* That *Truth ſhould ſpring out of the Earth, and Righteouſneſs look down from Heaven.* That *Mercy and Truth ſhould meet together,*

together, Righteouſneſs and Peace ſhould kiſs each other; and that glory may dwell in our Land. If the deſire to be ſafe from inteſtine and domeſtick troubles, ſecure from Forreign force and invaſion; to be loved, reſpected, and honoured by their Friends and Allies; dreaded by their greateſt Enemies; to be great in Riches, great in Fame, and greater in all Goodneſs and Virtue, to be the joy and glory of all Lands: If they deſire theſe, there is no way to obtain them, but by uniting our ſelves with this common Bond, and indiſſoluble Chain of a good Conſcience, towards God and all men: which will teach every man his duty; keep every man quietly, peaceably, and contentedly in his place and ſtation; and ſecure unto us all thoſe dear Delights of Humane Nature, Peace, Property, and Religion. If they deſire theſe, thus muſt they endeavour after them; and if they will not endeavour after them, we cannot but judge, that they do not deſire them. And I am ſure, if they do not deſire theſe bleſſings, both for themſelves and all others, they neither deſerve them, nor any love, pity, favour, coun-

tenance or kindneſs; but ought to be look'd upon, not as men, but fierce and ſavage Beaſts, Wolves, Tigers, and Bears, given to Prey, Rapine, and Ravage; and they may eaſily gheſs what will follow, if once they come to be look'd upon and eſteemed ſuch.

Laſtly, if they have any love or kindneſs for their Souls, or ever hope for eternal Salvation, it muſt not be expected without obedience to God, obedience to Government, and obedience to Conſcience.

After all this I will hope that thoſe happy days will ſhine upon us, in which we may ſay, *Our* Jeruſalem *is built as a City that is compact, or at unity with it ſelf:* And that we ſhall be able to ſing that glorious and triumphant Song of Praiſe and Thankſgiving, *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praiſed in the City of our God, in the mountain of his holineſs. Beautiful for ſituation, the joy of the whole earth is* Mount Zion *on the ſides of the North, the City of the great King. God is well known in her Palaces as a ſure Refuge.*

Pſal. 122. 3.

Pſal. 48. 1.

To

To haſten which bleſſed and happy Age, let every good Chriſtian lay to his helping hand, and his praying heart, by endeavouring to follow the example of the great Apoſtle St. *Paul*, which is the great Concern and Intereſt of every Man, both in reference to Happineſs here and hereafter, *Keeping always a Conſcience void of offence towards God, and towards all Men.*

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